



RECENT ESSAYS AND WRITINGS

By the same Author

Glimpses of World History—2 vols.

Letters from a Father to His Daughter

Whither India?

A Window in Prison and Prison-land

Recent Essays and Writings

ON THE FUTURE OF INDIA, COMMUNALISM
AND OTHER SUBJECTS

By

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

During the last six months Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has contributed many articles to the press and has issued many statements. Some of these articles entitled 'Whither India?' 'A Window in Prison,' and 'Prison-land' have already appeared in pamphlet form. The others are spread out in the columns of newspapers and it is not easy to refer to them. Enquiries are often made for these writings and the Publishers have collected these which appear to have more than a passing value, in this booklet. No attempt has been made here to collect all the statements and writings of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru during the last six months.

April 1934

WHITHER INDIA?

The newcomer from prison has long been cut off from the rough and tumble of life and politics, and yet he has a certain advantage on his side. He can take a more detached view; he is not so much wrapped up in the controversies of the moment; he may be able to stress principles when others argue about petty tactics; he may actually see the realities under the surface of ever-changing phenomena.

Many people ask: What are we to do? The mouths of most of those who could answer, or help in framing the answer are shut either in prison or outside. But free advice, often accompanied by threats, comes to us in an unending stream from those who rule us and their faithful followers in this land. They warn us and threaten us and cajole us and offer us good advice by turns, anxious to influence us and yet uncertain of the right approach to us. Let us leave them and their advice for the moment; such gifts, even when free, are apt to be suspect.

Right action cannot come out of nothing; it must be preceded by thought. Thought which is not meant to lead to action has been called an abortion; action which is not based on thought is chaos and confusion. It is worthwhile therefore to clear our minds of all the tangled webs that may have grown there, to forget for the moment the immediate problems before us, the difficult knots we have to unravel, the day to day worries, and go back a little to basic facts and principles. What exactly do we want?

And why do we want it?

I write with diffidence because I have for long been cut off from the nationalist press, but I have a feeling that little attention is paid to these basic facts and principles. The censorship may be partly to blame for this, or the fear of it, but even that, I think, is not a sufficient explanation. Attention seems to be concentrated on the most trivial of issues and vital matters are ignored. Should Gandhiji see the Viceroy or not? Will Stanley Baldwin triumph over Winston Churchill? What has Sir Samuel Hoare said or not said? Are we going to get that wonderful thing called "Central Responsibility" or not? Hardly a reference to what we are driving at, hardly a thought of real issues.

Never in the long range of history has the world been in such a state of flux as it is to-day. Never has there been so much anxious questioning, so much doubt and bewilderment, so much examining of old institutions, existing ills and suggested remedies. There is a continuous process of change and revolution going on all over the world, and everywhere anxious statesmen are almost at their wits' end and grope about in the dark. It is obvious that we are a part of this great world problem and must be affected by world events. And yet, judging from the attention paid to these events in India, one would not think so. Major events are recorded in the news columns of papers but little attempt is made to see behind and beneath them, to understand the forces that are shaking and reforming the world before our eyes, to comprehend the essential nature of social, economic, and political reality. History, whether past or present, becomes just a magic show with little rhyme or reason, and with no lesson for us which

might guide our future path. On the gaily-decked official stage of India or England phantom figures come and go, posing for a while as great statesmen; Round Tablers flit about like pale shadows of those who created them, engaged in pitiful and interminable talk which interests few and affects an even smaller number. Their main concern is how to save the vested interests of various classes or groups; their main diversion, apart from feasting, is self-praise. Others, blissfully ignorant of all that has happened in the last half century, still talk the jargon of the Victorian Age and are surprised and resentful that nobody listens to them. Even the nasmyth hammer of war and revolution and world change has failed to produce the slightest dent on their remarkably hard heads. Yet others hide vested interests under cover of communalism or even nationalism. And then there is the vague but passionate nationalism of many who find present conditions intolerable and hunger for national freedom without clearly realising what form that freedom will take. And there are also here, as in many other countries, the usual accompaniments of a growing nationalism—an idealism, a mysticism, a feeling of exaltation, a belief in the mission of one's country, and something of the nature of religious revivalism. Essentially all these are middle class phenomena.

Our politics must either be those of magic or of science. The former of course requires no argument or logic; the latter is in theory at least entirely based on clarity of thought and reasoning and has no room for vague idealistic or religious or sentimental processes which confuse and befog the mind. Personally I have no faith in or use for the ways of magic and religion and I can

only consider the question on scientific grounds.

What then are we driving at? Freedom? Swaraj? Independence? Dominion Status? Words which may mean much or little or nothing at all. Egypt is "independent", and yet, as everybody knows it is at present little better than an Indian State, an autocracy imposed upon an unwilling people and propped up by the British. Economically, Egypt is a colony of some of the European imperialist Powers, notably the British. Ever since the World War there has been continuous conflict between Egyptian nationalism and the ruling authorities and this continues to-day. So in spite of a so-called "independence" Egypt is very far from even national freedom.

Again, whose freedom are we particularly striving for, for nationalism covers many sins and includes many conflicting elements? There is the feudal India of the princes, the India of the big zamindars, of small zamindars, of the professional classes, of the agriculturists, of the industrialists, of the bankers, of the lower middle class, of the workers. There are the interests of foreign capital and those of home capital, of foreign services and home services. The nationalist answer is to prefer home interests to foreign interests but beyond that it does not go. It tries to avoid disturbing the class divisions or the social *status quo*. It imagines that the various interests will somehow be accommodated when the country is free. Being essentially a middle class movement, nationalism works chiefly in the interests of that class. It is obvious that there are serious conflicts between various interests in a country, and every law, every policy which is good for one interest may be harmful for another. What is good for the Indian prince may be thoroughly bad for the people of his State,

what is profitable for the zamindar may ruin many of his tenants, what is demanded by foreign capital may crush the rising industries of the country.

Nothing is more absurd than to imagine that all the interests in the nation can be fitted in without injury to any. At every step some have to be sacrificed for others. A currency policy may be good for creditors or debtors, not for both at the same time. Inflation, resulting in a reduction or even wiping off of debts, will be welcomed by all debtors and by industry as a rule, but cursed by bankers and those who have fixed incomes. Early in the nineteenth century England deliberately sacrificed her agriculture for her rising industry. A few years ago, in 1925, by insisting on keeping the value of the pound sterling at par she sacrificed, to some extent, her industry to her banking and financial system, and faced industrial troubles and a huge general strike.

Any number of such instances can be given; they deal with the rival claims of different groups of the possessing classes. A more vital conflict of interests arises between these possessing classes as a whole and the others; between the Haves and Have-Nots. All this is obvious enough, but every effort is made to confuse the real issue by the holders of power, whether political or economic. The British Government is continually declaring before high heaven that they are trustees for our masses and India and England have common interests and can march hand in hand to a common destiny. Few people are taken in by this because nationalism makes us realise the inherent conflict between the two national interests. But nationalism does not make us realise the equally inherent and fundamental conflict between economic interests within the

nation. There is an attempt to cover this up and avoid it on the ground that the national issue must be settled first. Appeals are issued for unity between different classes and groups to face the common national foe, and those who point out the inherent conflict between landlord and tenant, or capitalist and wage labourer are criticised.

We may take it that the average person does not like conflict and continuous tension; he prefers peace and quiet, and is even prepared to sacrifice much for it. But the ostrich-like policy of refusing to see a conflict and a disorder which not only exist but are eating into society's vitals, to blind oneself to reality, will not end the conflict and the disorder or suddenly change reality into unreality; for a politician or a man of action such a policy can only end in disaster. It is therefore essential that we keep this in mind and fashion our idea of freedom accordingly. We cannot escape having to answer the question, now or later, for the freedom of which class or classes in India are we especially striving for? Do we place the masses, the peasantry and workers, first, or some other small class at the head of our list? Let us give the benefits of freedom to as many groups and classes as possible, but essentially who do we stand for, and when a conflict arises whose side must we take? To say that we shall not answer that question now is itself an answer and taking of sides, for it means that we stand by the existing order, the *status quo*.

The form of government is after all a means to an end; even freedom itself is a means, the end being human well-being, human growth, the ending of poverty and disease and suffering and the opportunity for every one to live the "good life", physically and mentally. What the "good life" is, is a matter we cannot go into here, but

most people will agree that freedom is essential to it—national freedom so far as the nation is concerned, personal freedom so far as the individual is concerned. For every restriction and inhibition stops growth and development and produces, apart from economic disorders, complexes and perversions in the nation and individual. So freedom is necessary. Equally necessary is the will and the capacity for co-operation. Modern life grows so complex, there is so much inter-dependence, that co-operation is the very breath that keeps it functioning.

The long course of history shows us a succession of different forms of government and changing economic forms of production and organisation. The two fit in and shape and influence each other. When economic change goes ahead too fast and the forms of government remain more or less static, a hiatus occurs, which is usually bridged over by a sudden change called revolution. The tremendous importance of economic events in shaping history and forms of government is almost universally admitted now.

We are often told that there is a world of difference between the East and the West. The West is said to be materialistic, the East spiritual, religious, etc. What exactly the East signifies is seldom indicated, for the East includes the Bedouins of the Arabian deserts, the Hindus of India, the nomads of the Siberian Steppes, the pastoral tribes of Mongolia, the typically irreligious Confucians of China, and the Samurai of Japan. There are tremendous national and cultural differences between the different countries of Asia as well as of Europe; but there is no such thing as East and West except in the minds of those who wish to make

this an excuse for imperialist domination, or those who have inherited such myths and fictions from a confused metaphysical past. Differences there are but they are chiefly due to different stages of economic growth.

We see, in north-western Europe, autocracy and feudalism giving place to the present capitalist order involving competition and large-scale production. The old small holdings disappear; the feudal checks on the serfs and cultivators go, and these agriculturists are also deprived of the little land they had. Large numbers of landless people are thrown out of employment and they have no land to fall back upon. A landless, propertyless proletariat is thus created. At the same time the checks and the controlled prices of the limited markets of feudal times disappear, and the open market appears. Ultimately this leads to the world market, the characteristic feature of capitalism.

Capitalism builds up on the basis of the landless proletariat, which could be employed as wage labourers in the factories, and the open market, where the machine-made goods could be sold. It grows rapidly and spreads all over the world. In the producing countries it was an active and living capitalism; in the colonial and consuming countries it was just a passive consumption of the goods made by machine industry in the West. North-western Europe, and a little later, North America, exploit the resources of the world; they exploit Asia, Africa, East Europe and South America. They add vastly to the wealth of the world but this wealth is largly concentrated in a few nations and a few hands.

In this growth of capitalism, dominion over India was of vital importance to England. India's gold, in the early

stages, helped in the further industrialisation of England. And then India became a great producer of raw material to feed the factories of England and a huge market to consume the goods made in these factories. England, in her passionate desire to accumulate wealth, sacrificed her agriculture to her industry. England became almost a kind of vast city and India the rural area attached to her.

The concentration of wealth in fewer hands went on. But the exploitation of India and other countries brought so much wealth to England that some of it trickled down to the working class and their standards of living rose. Working class agitations were controlled and soothed by concessions from the capitalist owners, which they could well afford from the profits of imperialist exploitation. Wages rose; hours of work went down; there were insurance and other welfare schemes for the workers. A general prosperity in England took the edge off working class discontent.

In India, passive industrialisation meant an ever growing burden on land. She became just a consumer of foreign machine made goods. Her own cottage industries were partly destroyed forcibly, and partly by economic forces, and nothing took their place. All the ingredients and conditions for industrialisation were present, but England did not encourage this, and indeed tried to prevent it by taxing machinery. And so the burden on the land grew and with it unemployment and poverty, and there was a progressive ruralisation of India.

But the processes of history and economics cannot be stopped for long. Although general poverty was increasing, small groups accumulated some capital and wanted fields for investment. And so machine industry grew in

India, partly with Indian capital, very much more so with foreign capital. Indian capital was largely dependent on foreign capital and, in particular, could be controlled by the foreign banking system. It is well known that the World War gave a great push to Indian industry and afterwards, for reasons of imperial policy, England changed her policy towards Indian industry and began to encourage it, but mostly with foreign capital. The growth of so-called swadeshi industries in India thus represented to a very great extent the increasing hold of British capital on India.

The growth of industries and nationalist movements in all the countries of the East checked western exploitation and the profits of western capitalism began to go down. War debts and other consequences of the war were a tremendous burden for all the countries concerned. There was not so much money or profits of industry to be distributed to the working class in the west, and the discontent and pressure of the workers grew. There was also the living incentive and inspiration of the Russian Revolution for the workers.

Meanwhile two other processes were working silently but with great rapidity. One was the concentration of wealth and industrial power in fewer hands by the formation of huge trusts, cartels, and combines. The other was a continuous improvement in technique in the methods of production, leading to greater mechanisation, far greater production, and more unemployment as workers were replaced by machinery. And this led to a curious result. Just when industry was producing goods on the biggest mass scale in history, there were few people to buy them as the great majority were too poor to be able to afford them. The armies of the unemployed were not earning

anything, so how could they spend; and even the majority of those earning had little to spare. A new truth suddenly dawned on the perplexed minds of the great captains of industry (this dawning process has not yet taken place among the leaders of industry in India), and the truth was this: that mass production necessitates mass consumption. But if the masses have no money how are they to buy or consume? And what of production then? So production is stopped or restricted and the wheels of industry slow down till they barely move. Unemployment grows all the more and this again makes consumption diminish.

This is the crisis of capitalism which has had the world by the throat for over four years. Essentially it is due to the ill distribution of the world's wealth; to its concentration in a few hands. And the disease seems to be of the essence of capitalism and grows with it till it eats and destroys the very system which created it. There is no lack of money in the world, no lack of food stuffs, or the many other things that man requires. The world is richer to-day than it has ever been and holds promise of untold advance in the near future. And yet the system breaks down and while millions starve and endure privation, huge quantities of food stuffs and other articles are destroyed, insect pests are let loose on the fields to destroy crops, harvests are not gathered, and nations meet together to confer how to restrict future crops of wheat and cotton and tea and coffee and so many other articles. From the beginning of history man has fought with nature to get the barest necessities of life, and now that nature's wealth is poured out before him, enough to remove poverty for ever from the world, his only way of dealing with it is

to burn and destroy it, and become poorer and more destitute in the process.

History has never offered a more amazing paradox. It seems clear enough that the capitalist system of industry, whatever its services in the past may have been, is no longer suited to the present methods of production. Technical advance has gone far ahead of the existing social structure and, as in the past, this hiatus causes most of our present-day disorders. Till that lag is made up and a new system in keeping with the new technique is adopted, the disorders are likely to continue. The change over to the new system is of course opposed by those who have vested interests in the old system and though this old system is dying before their eyes, they prefer to hold on to their little rather than share a lot with others.

It is not, fundamentally, a moral issue, as some people imagine, although there is a moral side to it. It is not a question of blaming capitalism or cursing capitalists and the like. Capitalism has been of the greatest service to the world and individual capitalists are but tiny wheels in the big machine. The question now is whether the capitalist system has not outlived its day and must now give place to a better and a saner ordering of human affairs, which is more in keeping with the progress of science and human knowledge.

In India, during this period, the tremendous burden on land continued and even increased, despite the growth of industry in certain areas. Economic discontent increased. The middle classes grew up, and finding no sufficient scope for self-development, demanded political changes and took to agitation. More or less similar causes worked all over the colonial and dependent East. Especially

after the war, national movements grew rapidly in Egypt and most of the countries of Asia. These movements were essentially due to the distress of the masses and the lower middle classes. There was a strange similarity even in the methods employed by these movements—non-co-operation, boycotts of legislatures, boycotts of goods, *hartals*, strikes, ets. Occasionally there were violent outbreaks, as in Egypt and Syria, but stress was laid far more on peaceful methods. In India, of course, non-violence was made a basic principle by the Congress at the suggestion of Gandhiji. All these national struggles for freedom have continued till now and they are bound to continue till a solution of the basic problem is found. Fundamentally, this solution is not merely a question of satisfying the natural desire for self-rule but one of filling hungry stomachs.

The great revolutionary nationalist urge in Asia of the after-war years gradually exhausted itself for the time being and conditions stabilised themselves. In India this took the form of the Swarajist entry into the Assembly and the Councils. In Europe also the middle nineteen-twenties was a period of settling down and adaptation to the new conditions created by the World War. The revolution that had hovered all over Europe in 1919 and 1920 failed to come off and receded into the back ground. American gold poured into Europe and revived to some extent the war-weary and disillusioned peoples of that continent and created a false appearance of prosperity. But this prosperity had no real basis and the crash came in 1929 when the United States of America stopped lending money to Europe and South America. Many factors, and especially the inherent conflicts of a declining capitalism, con-

tributed to this crash, and the house of cards of after-war capitalist prosperity began to tumble down. That process of tumbling down has been going on at a tremendous pace for four years and there is no end to it yet. It is called the slump, trade depression, the crisis, etc., but it is really the evening of the capitalist system and the world is being compelled by circumstances to recognise this. International trade is reaching vanishing point, international co-operation has failed, the world-market which was the essential basis of capitalism, is disappearing, and each nation is trying frantically to shift for itself at the cost of others. Whatever the future may bring, one thing is certain: that the old order has gone and all the king's horses and all the king's men will not set it up again.

As the old capitalist order has tottered, the challenge to it by the growing forces of labour has grown more intense. This challenge, when it has become dangerous, has induced the possessing classes to sink their petty differences and band themselves together to fight the common foe. This has led to fascism and, in its milder forms, to the formation of so-called national governments. Essentially, these are the last ditch efforts of the possessing classes, or the "kept classes" as they have been called by an American economist, to hold on to what they have. The struggle becomes more intense and the forms of nineteenth century democracy are discarded. But fascism or national governments offer no solution of the fundamental economic inconsistencies of the present-day capitalist system and so long as they do not remove the inequalities of wealth and solve the problem of distribution, they are doomed to fail. Of the major capitalist countries the United States of America is the only place where some attempt is being

made today towards lessening to a slight extent inequalities in wealth by State action. Carried to a logical conclusion, President Roosevelt's programme will lead to a form of State Socialism; it is far more likely that the effort will fail and result in fascism. England, as is her habit, is grimly muddling through and waiting for something to happen. Meanwhile she has derived considerable help from India's gold and resources. But all this is temporary relief only and the nations slide downhill and approach the brink.

Thus, if we survey the world today, we find that capitalism, having solved the problem of production, helplessly faces the allied problem of distribution and is unable to solve it. It was not in the nature of the capitalist system to deal satisfactorily with distribution, and production alone makes the world top-heavy and unbalanced. To find a solution for distributing wealth and purchasing power evenly is to put an end to the basic inequalities of the capitalist system and to replace capitalism itself by a more scientific system.

Capitalism has led to imperialism and to the conflicts of imperialist powers in search for colonial areas for exploitation, for areas of raw produce and for markets for manufactured goods. It has led to ever-increasing conflicts with the rising nationalism of colonial countries, and to social conflicts with powerful movements of the exploited working class. It has resulted in recurrent crises, political and economic, leading to economic and tariff wars as well as political wars on an enormous scale. Every subsequent crisis is on a bigger scale than the previous one, and now we live in a perpetual state of crisis and slump and the shadow of war darkens the horizon.

And yet it is well to remember that the world to-day

has a surfeit of food and the other good things of life. Terrible want exists because the present system does not know how to distribute them. Repeated international conferences have failed to find a way out because they represented the interests of vested interests and dared not touch the system itself. They grope blindly in the dark in their stuffy rooms while the foundations of the house they built are being sapped by the advance of science and economic events. Everywhere thinkers have recognised the utter inadequacy of the existing system, though they have differed as to the remedies. Communists and socialists point with confidence to the way of socialism and they are an ever growing power for they have science and logic on their side. In America a great stir was caused recently by the Technocrats, a group of engineers who want to do away with money itself and to substitute for it a unit of energy, an erg. In England the social credit theories of Major Douglas, according to which the whole production of the nation will be evenly distributed to the whole population—a kind of "dividends for all", find increasing acceptance. Barter takes the place of trade both in the domestic and the international market. The growth of these revolutionary theories even among the well-to-do classes, and especially the intellectuals, is in itself an indication of the tremendous change in mentality that is taking place in the world. How many of us can conceive a world without money and with the invisible erg as its measure of value? And yet this is soberly and earnestly advocated not by wild agitators but by well-known economists and engineers.

This is the world background.

The Asiatic background is intimately related to this

and yet it has its peculiar features. Asia is the main field of conflict between nationalism and imperialism. Asia is still undeveloped as compared to Europe and North America. It has a vast population which can consume goods if they had the necessary purchasing power to do so. To the hard-pressed imperialist Powers seeking frantically for areas of economic expansion, Asia still offers a field, though nationalism offers many obstructions. Hence the talk of a "push to Asia" to find an outlet for the surplus goods of the west and thus stabilise western capitalism for another period. Capitalism is a young and growing force in the East; it has not, as in India, wholly overthrown feudalism yet. But even before capitalism had established itself other forces, inimical to it, have risen to challenge it. And it is obvious that if capitalism collapses in Europe and America it cannot survive in Asia.

Nationalism is still the strongest forces in Asia (we can ignore for our present purpose the Soviet territories of Asia). This is natural as a country under alien domination must inevitably think first in terms of nationalism. But the powerful economic forces working for change in the world today have influenced this nationalism to an ever-increasing extent and everywhere it is appearing in socialistic garb. Gradually the nationalist struggle for political freedom is becoming a social struggle also for economic freedom. Independence and the socialist State become the objectives, with varying degrees of stress being laid on the two aspects of the problem. As political freedom is delayed, the other aspect assumes greater importance, and it now seems probable, especially because of world conditions, that political and social emancipation will come together to some at least of the countries of Asia.

That is the Asiatic background.

In India, as in other Asiatic colonial countries, we find a struggle to-day between the old nationalist ideology and the new economic ideology. Most of us have grown up under the nationalist tradition and it is hard to give up the mental habits of a lifetime. And yet we realise that this outlook is inadequate; it does not fit in with existing conditions in our country or in the world; there is a hiatus, a lag. We try to bridge this hiatus but the process of crossing over to a new ideology is always a painful one. Many of us are confused and perplexed to-day because of this. But the crossing has to be made, unless we are to remain in a stagnant backwater, overwhelmed from time to time by the wash of the boats that move down the river of progress. We must realise that the nineteenth century cannot solve the problems of the twentieth, much less can the seventh century or earlier ages do so.

Having glanced at the general background of Asia and the world we can have a clearer view of our own national problem. India's freedom affects each one of us intimately and we are apt to look upon it as a thing apart and unconnected with world events. But the Indian problem is a part of the Asiatic problem and is tied up with the problems of the world. We cannot, even if we will it, separate it from the rest. What happens in India will affect the world and world events will change India's future. Indeed it may be said that the three great world problems to-day are: the fate of capitalism, which means the fate of Europe and America, the future of India, and the future of China, and all these are inter-related.

India's struggle to-day is part of the great struggle which is going on all over the world for the emancipation

of the oppressed. Essentially, this is an economic struggle, with hunger and want as its driving forces, although it puts on nationalist and other dresses.

Indian freedom is necessary because the burden on the Indian masses as well as the middle classes is too heavy to be borne and must be lightened or done away with. The measure of freedom is the extent to which this burden is removed. This burden is due to the vested interests of a foreign government as well as those of certain groups and classes in India and abroad. The achievement of freedom thus becomes a question, as Gandhiji said recently, of divesting vested interests. If an indigenous government took the place of the foreign government and kept all the vested interests intact, this would not even be the shadow of freedom.

We have got into an extraordinary habit of thinking of freedom in terms of paper constitutions. Nothing could be more absurd than this lawyer's mentality which ignores life and the vital economic issues and can only proceed on the basis of the *status quo* and precedents. Too much reliance on past practice has somehow succeeded in twisting the lawyer's head backwards and he seems to be incapable of looking ahead. Even the halt and the lame go slowly forward; not so the lawyer who is convinced, like the fanatic in religion, that truth can only lie in the past.

The Round Table scheme is almost as dead as Queen Anne and hardly deserves notice. It was not meant to give an iota of freedom to the Indian people; it sought to win over certain Indian vested interests to the British side and in this it succeeded. It answered, to the satisfaction of its votaries, the question I had formulated at the beginning of this essay: whose freedom are we striving for? It gave

greater protection and assurance and freedom to the British vested interests in India. It was Home Rule for the Viceroy as Mr. Vithalbhai Patel said. It confirmed the interests of British capital and British services and, in some cases, gave them even more than they have now. It tried to perpetuate the alien military occupation of India. Further, it gave greater freedom and importance to the vested interests of the princes and the semi-feudal magnates. In brief, the whole scheme was meant for the protection and perpetuation of the numerous vested interest that exploit the Indian masses. Having done this useful and, to themselves, profitable piece of work, the originators of the scheme told us that autonomy was a costly affair and would mean the expenditure of many extra millions for each province! Thus not only were all the old burdens on the masses to be continued but many new ones were to be added. This was the ingenious solution discovered by the wise and learned men who foregathered at the Round Table Conference. Intent on protecting their class privileges they happened to forget an odd three hundred and fifty million people in India.

Even a child in politics can point out the folly of this procedure. The whole basis and urge of the national movement came from a desire for economic betterment, to throw off the burdens that crushed the masses and to end the exploitation of the Indian people. If these burdens continue and are actually added to, it does not require a powerful mind to realise that the fight must not only continue but grow more intense. Leaders and individuals may come and go; they may get tired and slacken off; they may compromise or betray; but the exploited and suffering masses must carry on the struggle for their drill-

sergeant is hunger. Swaraj or freedom from exploitation for them is not a fine paper constitution or a problem of the hereafter. It is question of the here and now, of immediate relief. Roast lamb and mint sauce may be a tasty dish for those who eat it but the poor lamb is not likely to appreciate the force of the best of arguments which point out the beauty of sacrifice for the good of the elect and the joys of close communion, even though dead, with mint sauce.

India's immediate goal can therefore only be considered in terms of the ending of the exploitation of her people. Politically, it must mean independence and the severance of the British connection, which means imperialist dominion; economically and socially it must mean the ending of all special class privileges and vested interests. The whole world is struggling to this end; India can do no less, and in this way the Indian struggle for freedom lines up with the world struggle. Is our aim human welfare or the preservation of class privileges and the vested interests of pampered groups? The question must be answered clearly and unequivocally by each one of us. There is no room for quibbling when the fate of nations and millions of human beings is at stake. The day for palace intrigues and parlour politics and pacts and compromises passes when the masses enter politics. Their manners are not those of the drawing room; we never took the trouble to teach them any manners. Their school is the school of events and suffering is their teacher. They learn their politics from great movements which bring out the true nature of individuals and classes, and the civil disobedience movement has taught the Indian masses many a lesson which they will never forget.

Independence is a much abused word and it hardly connotes what we are driving at. And yet there is no other suitable word and, for want of a better, we must use it. National isolation is neither a desirable nor a possible ideal in a world which is daily becoming more of a unit. International and intra-national activities dominate the world and nations are growing more and more inter-dependent. Our ideal and objective cannot go against this historical tendency and we must be prepared to discard a narrow nationalism in favour of world co-operation and real internationalism. Independence therefore cannot mean for us isolation but freedom from all imperialist control, and because Britain to-day represents imperialism, our freedom can only come after the British connection is severed. We have no quarrel with the British people, but between British imperialism and Indian freedom there is no meeting ground and there can be no peace. If imperialism goes from Britain we shall gladly co-operate with her in the wider international field; not otherwise.

British statesmen of the Liberal and Labour variety often point out to us the ills of a narrow nationalism and dwell on the virtues of what used to be known as the British Empire and is now euphemistically called the British Commonwealth of Nations. Under cover of fine and radical words and phrases they seek to hide the ugly and brutal face of imperialism and try to keep us in its embrace of death. Some Indian public men, who ought to know better, also praise the virtues of internationalism, meaning thereby the British Empire, and tell us in sorrow how narrow-minded we are in demanding independence, in place of that wonderful thing (which nobody offers

us) Dominion Status. The British, it is well known, have a remarkable capacity for combining their moral instincts with their self-interest. That is perhaps not unnatural, but it is remarkable how some of our own countrymen are taken in by this unctuous and hypocritical attitude. Even the light of day is wasted on those who keep their eyes shut. It is worth noting however that the foreign policy of England has been the greatest stumbling block to international co-operation through the League of Nations or otherwise. All the European and American world knows this but most of us, who look at foreign politics through English spectacles, have not grasped this fact yet. Disarmament, air-bombing, the attitude to the Manchurian question, are some of the recent witnesses to England's attitude. Even the Kellogg-Briand Pact of Paris, which was to have outlawed war, was only accepted by England subject to certain qualifications and reservations regarding her empire, which effectively nullified the Pact. The British Empire and real internationalism are as the poles apart and it is not through that empire that we can march to internationalism.

The real question before us, and before the whole world, is one of fundamental change of regime, politically, economically, socially. Only thus can we put India on the road to progress and stop the progressive deterioration of our country. In a revolutionary period, such as exists in the world to-day, it is foolish waste of energy to think and act in terms of carrying on the existing regime and trying to reform it and improve it. To do so is to waste the opportunity which history offers once in a long while. "The whole world is in revolution" says Mussolini. "Events themselves are a tremendous force pushing us on

like some implacable will." Individuals, however eminent, play but a minor role when the world is on the move. They may divert the main current here and there to some slight extent; they may not and cannot stop the rushing torrent. And therefore the only peace that can endure is with circumstances, not merely with men.

Whither India? Surely to the great human goal of social and economic equality, to the ending of all exploitation of nation by nation and class by class, to national freedom within the frame-work of an international co-operative socialist world federation. This is not such an empty idealist dream as some people imagine. It is within the range of the practical politics of to-day and the near future. We may not have it within our grasp but those with vision can see it emerging on the horizon. And even if there be delay in the realisation of our goal, what does it matter if our steps march in the right direction and our eyes look steadily in front. For in the pursuit itself of a mighty purpose there is joy and happiness and a measure of achievement. As Bernard Shaw has said: "This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of nature, instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

SOME CRITICISMS CONSIDERED

My articles entitled "Whither India?" have had a mixed welcome. But they have amply justified the labour spent on them for they have directed the public mind to certain basic problems which are seldom considered in India, and have perhaps made some people think on novel lines. There have been two types of criticisms: the left criticism which accepted the main line of thought but said that it did not go far enough, and the right criticism which attacked the very premises of my argument and rejected with anger my conclusions. On both sides the personal element was brought in and my seeming contradictions and weaknesses were pointed out.

I had attempted to deal with the problem as impersonally and objectively as it was possible for me and I had hoped that it would be so considered. Personalities count in politics but they should not intrude themselves when world problems and world forces are analysed and a meaning is sought to be drawn from them. It is therefore desirable that my many failings and deficiencies might be forgotten for a while for they do not affect these problems. Personally I am not conscious of any glaring inconsistencies in my ideas or activities during the last thirteen years or so but no doubt I am a partial observer. It is perfectly true that I have grown mentally during this period and many a vague idea has taken shape and many a doubt has been removed. It is also true that as an active

politician, having to face day to day problems, I have sometimes had to make compromises with life and the conditions that I found existing at a particular moment. But even so I am not aware of any betrayal of the ideal that drew me on or the principles I held.

I have not seen all the criticisms of my articles and even those that I have seen are too many to be dealt with here. I shall therefore confine my reply to two lengthy and anonymous criticisms—one by "G" which appeared in a number of newspapers in Northern India and the other entitled "Into the Pit. . . ." which was published by *The Pioneer*. Both these deal with the problem from the extreme "right" point of view. I have already replied separately to the "left" criticism.

Reading these two anonymous articles I marvelled at the extreme ignorance of the writers of the accepted commonplaces of history and economics and modern thought, and the amazing confusion that existed in their heads. I am not vain enough to imagine that I shall succeed in illumining the dark corners of their brains or make them understand the most obvious and elementary facts. But I should like to inform them that there was nothing novel in my survey of history and present day conditions, although to them it might have appeared strange enough; it was a repetition of what practically every thinker and intelligent writer of to-day says. The conclusions drawn from this survey might differ, but the facts themselves are beyond dispute for all except those who have a horror of facts or an incapacity or unwillingness to see straight. *The Statesman* is no friend of communism or socialism. It has given me fair warning that if I carry on in the way I am doing I shall have to be suppressed. And yet *The*

Statesman said, after reading the first two of my articles: "With the Pandit's analysis of the problem we are largely in agreement, indeed substantially the same picture has often been presented in these columns." When, however, *The Statesman* saw my third article, in which an attempt was made to apply the conclusions it had largely accepted to India, it drew away in fear and anger.

I have been told that the "programme" I had laid down in my articles was wanting in clarity and details. As a matter of fact I had laid down no programme at all, much less a detailed programme, although a certain programme would follow inevitably if my premises and argument were correct. I had merely endeavoured to trace the course of historical development of capitalism and to point out how economic forces were dominating and changing the world. Both the criticisms I am dealing with have ignored this and have branched off into wholly irrelevant questions. What has the Gandhi-Irwin pact to do with the subject I was considering? Soviet Russia, like King Charles' head, also seems to have become an obsession with the two anonymous critics and this nightmare has, I am afraid, seriously diminished their capacity for clear thought.

I have not defined "Capitalist" or "Capitalism," I am told, and, mortal sin, I have assumed the existence of British imperialism without proving it! I plead guilty to the charge and await sentence. Science is a revolutionary product (I agree) and must be avoided, and is not today's magic to-morrow's science? In any event my science is nescience leading straight "to a Soviet hell." "Into the Pit. . . . . ." of this close reasoning let us for the moment leave the author of this rigmarole.

But "G" runs him close. In a "scientific" world we are told "the wife may be regarded as sheer luxury." History has been ransacked by him to show that "no example could be produced to prove that the lot of the masses has ever been improved by violent means." It would be interesting to find out where "G" derived his knowledge of history. Then we are given an insight into European politics by being told that Germany and Italy have adopted Bolshevik methods. We await enlightenment as to what these methods are. But to judge of the efficacy of these methods we must wait for another hundred years! It is some comfort to know that we are in a position to judge of the effects of the French Revolution now.

It is a little difficult to say much about this ignorant jumble of crude ideas and prejudices. But we can draw this conclusion from it that when interests are at stake the mind and the intellect are forced into the background and passions hold the field. "There is nothing so passionate"—says Yeats, the Irish poet, "as a vested interest disguised as an intellectual conviction."

When the word "capitalism" is used intelligently it can mean only one thing: the economic system that has developed since the Industrial Revolution which began in England a century and half ago. It means industrial capitalism. To give a recent definition (by G. D. H. Cole): capitalism means the developed system of production for profit based on private ownership of the means of production. It makes fundamentally for scarcity and not abundance, though the capitalist is often led to seek ways of cheapening individual products. For it the making of profits is the end of production, and it neces-

sarily treats wages as a cost to be kept down as low as possible, and therefore tends to restrict mass purchasing power.

It is this system that we have to consider and not the merits of individual capitalists, some of whom according to "G", are even prepared to make a big sacrifice, but with a proviso attached. I endeavoured very briefly to trace in my previous articles the growth and decline of this system and to point out that it was breaking up to-day. This process of disruption, owing to economic causes, has nothing to do with the goodness or otherwise of capitalists or our own wishes in the matter. If the diagnosis is correct then the disease must have a speedy and a fatal end however much some of us might desire a continuation of the present system.

The anonymous gentlemen (or is it a lady?) from the Pit appears to think that the French Revolution and the Russian Bolshevik Revolution were the same kind of phenomena and represent an identical or similar conflict between social forces. There could be no greater error. The French Revolution was a continuation on a more thorough and far-reaching scale of the English Revolution which cost Charles I his head and James II his crown, and which brought the middle classes to the seats of power. These middle class revolutions largely ended the feudal period when political power was an inherited privilege.

In England the process was not as thorough as in France and hence relics of feudalism still linger in England and there are more class distinctions in England to-day than in almost any country of Europe or America. Napoleon carried on the work of the French Revolution and was instrumental in establishing the capitalist middle

class regime all over western Europe. The whole of 19th century civilisation in Europe was based on the ideology of the French Revolution. This ideology in its turn derived from the ideas of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau and the Encyclopædists that is to say from the period before the Industrial Revolution. This ideology, with its slogan of political liberty, equality and fraternity, became completely out of date with the growth of industrial capitalism.

Political liberty brought the vote but it was gradually discovered that this was of little use when there was so much economic inequality. A starving man could do little with his vote and could be easily coerced and exploited. This gave rise to new theories and ideas based on the economic relations of various groups, and socialism saw the light of day. A vague and idealistic socialism developed later into the scientific socialism of Karl Marx. The Russian Revolution was the direct product and justification of the Marxist theory—the first revolution of March 1917 being a middle class turn over, the second one in November 1917 a proletarian victory.

The French Revolution was based on the idea of the sacredness of private property. The writer in *The Pioneer* does not seem to approve of the *sansculottes*. Perhaps it will surprise him to learn that they fought for the Declaration of the Rights of Man which in Article 17 declared: "La propriete etant un droit inviolable et sacre, nul ne peut etre prive de ses proprietes . . . ."

It became evident, however, during the 19th century, that a theoretical equality before the law or the possession of a vote did not bring real equality. Economic inequality, the maldistribution of wealth, which capitalism pro-

gressively increased, made equality impossible of attainment and exploitation of man by man and group by group increased. Thinkers therefore came to the conclusion that economic equality should be aimed at and at the root of this was the control of the means of production by society as a whole and the severe restriction of private property.

No one has said, as *The Pioneer* article seems to imagine, that all men are physically or mentally equal, or that all nations, are similarly situated. What has been said, and what is admitted by the great majority of intelligent men, is that all human beings should have an equality of opportunity. The present capitalist system does not and cannot in the nature of things provide this equality of opportunity.

The famous 19th century saying about "government of the people, by the people and for the people" failed to materialise in practice because under the capitalist system the government was neither by the people nor for the people. It was a government by the possessing classes for their own benefit. The people, according to them were themselves: all others were in the outer darkness. A real government by the people and for the people can only be established when the masses hold power, that is under socialism when all the people really share in the government and the wealth of the country.

The Pioneer writer informs us that if the State becomes the sole capitalist then the lot of the workers will be worst of all because the State will exploit them mercilessly. This is a remarkable argument. What is the State under socialism and who benefits by the exploitation? If the people as a whole choose to exploit themselves they are

perfectly welcome to do so, but even so the benefits go to them as a whole and not to selected groups or individuals.

Where will the surplus go, he further asks in an agony of apprehension? He cannot get out of the old rut of thinking along the lines of the capitalist economics of scarcity. There will be no surplus in a properly ordered and planned society and whatever is produced will go towards raising the standard of living of the people. Certainly, a man should be allowed the fruits of his labour. It is because these fruits are forcibly taken away from him under the capitalist system that we object to that system. Only under socialism will he have the full enjoyment of these fruits of his toil.

It is perfectly true that there can be no perfect freedom for an individual or nation when there is co-operation or interdependence with others. Every form of social life involves a restriction of individual freedom. But it is the merest quibbling to say that there can be no such thing as national freedom within the framework of an international socialist federation. When a measure of national freedom is given up willingly for the purposes of international co-operation this is not usually considered as a loss of freedom for the individual or the group. Is Wales less free because it forms part of Great Britain?

"G" tells us that the "very idea that the interests of the upper and middle classes conflict with those of the peasantry and the workers seems to be untenable." And yet, strange to say, this untenable idea is held by almost every thinker or intelligent person in the West where a great deal of thought has been given to this subject. If he will study a little history or any modern book on the subject it may help him to clear up his ideas. Or it might

even be helpful to visit a factory and find out what the owners and the workers think about each other's interests.

Both the critics seem to be greatly interested in my views on non-violence. Am I for coercion or compulsion? "G" seems to thunder out, and he tells me, quoting Gandhiji as his authority, that the method alone is the deciding factor. I was not aware that Gandhiji had made any such one-sided statement although he has always laid stress on the methods to be employed.

None of these questions arises from my articles for I had dealt only with a historical process and the ideal to be aimed at. I had not referred to any methods. But it is desirable none the less to answer the questions.

However important the method may be I entirely fail to understand how it can take the place of the objective. It is essential to have the objective and know the direction before a single step can be taken. As for the method, I might clear the ground by saying that, so far as I am concerned, it does not consist of preaching religion or philanthropy. I have no use for either and I have often found that they cover the rankest hypocrisy and selfishness. I certainly believe in ethics and morality and truthfulness and many other virtues but my belief in them does not turn them into methods; they can only be attributes of a method.

Coercion or conversion? What is the whole principle of the State based on? And the present social system? Is not coercion and enforced conformity the very basis of both? Army, police, laws, prisons, taxes are all methods of coercion. The zamindar who realises rent and often many illegal cesses relies on coercion, not on conversion of the tenant. The factory owner who gives starvation

wages does not rely on conversion. Hunger and the organised forces of the State are the coercive processes employed by both. Is a lock-out or an attempt to reduce wages a method of conversion? It is well to realise that those who belong to the favoured and possessing classes retain these positions by methods of coercion alone and it does not lie in their mouths to talk of conversion. The principal moral argument against the present system and in favour of socialism is that the latter reduces the element of coercion and will, it is hoped, ultimately do away with it altogether.

How are we to change over to a new system based on co-operation? And how are we to divest vested interests? We are told by *The Pioneer* writer, and I think rightly, that the capitalist will not "tamely submit to be robbed of his wealth, or vested interests tamely submit to be divested." History also shows us that there is no instance of a privileged class or group or nation giving up its special privileges or interests willingly. Individuals have done so often enough but not a group. Always a measure of coercion has been applied, pressure has been brought to bear, or conditions have been created which make it impossible or unprofitable for vested interests to carry on. And then the enforced conversion takes place. The methods of this enforcement may be brutal or civilized.

I have no doubt that coercion or pressure is necessary to bring about political and social change in India. Indeed our non-violent mass movements of the past thirteen years have been powerful weapons to exercise this pressure. Undoubtedly they convert stray individuals from the opposing group and partly weaken the resistance of that group by removing the moral justification for domination and repres-

sion. But essentially they are processes to coerce the opposing nation or group.

It is perfectly true that this method of coercion is the most civilized and moral method and it avoids as far as possible the unpleasant reactions and consequences of violence. I think that it does offer a moral equivalent for violent warfare and, if civilisation does not collapse, it will gradually adopt this peaceful method of settling its disputes. But it seems to me a fact that cannot be disputed or challenged that a non-violent mass struggle coerces and is meant to coerce the other party. The boycott of goods is an obvious instance.

Personally I have accepted the non-violent method because not only did it appeal to me in theory but it seemed to be peculiarly suited to present conditions in India. That belief has grown in me. But I have made it clear on many occasions that non-violence is no infallible creed with me and although I greatly prefer it to violence, I prefer freedom with violence to subjection with non-violence. That choice does not arise for me to-day because I believe that for a long time to come our most effective methods must be non-violent. I might add that I do not look upon non-violent non-co-operation or civil disobedience as a negative and passive method, a kind of pious and static pacifism, but as an active dynamic and forceful method of enforcing the mass will.

The question of violence or non-violence may arise, and indeed is bound to arise, in another form after the conquest of the State power. There may be attempts to upset the new form of government by reactionary groups. Will "G" advise the new government to use the resources of the State to coerce these elements into submission or does he

think that the religious and philanthropic argument should be used to convert them? Then again the new government may pass laws which, carrying out the will of the great majority of the people, seek to divest privileged groups. Will "G" then advise these groups to submit to the majority opinion or to resist, and if the latter, how should their resistance be met?

There is one other subject on which I should like to touch and that is khaddar. I believe in industrialisation and the big machine and I should like to see factories spring up all over India. I want to increase the wealth of India and the standards of living of the Indian people and it seems to me that this can only be done by the application of science to industry resulting in large-scale industrialisation. Quite apart from my own desires, I think that present day conditions are bound to result in the progressive industrialisation of the country. And yet I support hand-spinning and khaddar under existing conditions in India.

For me this has to-day an economic, a political and a social value. It fits in with the present peasant structure, brings them some relief and makes them self-reliant. It helps to bring us into touch with the peasant masses and to organise them to some extent. It is an effective political weapon in that it helps in the boycott of foreign cloth, and at the same time it acts as some check on the Indian mills, preventing them raising their prices too much. During the Great War foreign imports of cloth fell greatly and there was a cloth famine. Indian millowners made vast profits by raising their prices and exploiting this more or less protected market. They will no doubt exploit every such opportunity.

But khaddar can now fill the gap during times of crisis

and prevent this exploitation to a large extent. There can be no doubt that khaddar has justified itself in some ways. At the same time it is equally true that it is an out-of-date form of production and it will not be possible, through it, to increase the wealth of the country greatly or raise the standard of living of the masses. Therefore, I think that the big machine must come and I am sure that khaddar will not prevent its coming. It may be that the big machine itself gets decentralised to a large extent in the course of the next few years. The enormous growth in the use of electric power has revolutionised world industry during the last thirty years and it will no doubt revolutionise it still further.

In conclusion may I assure the writer in *The Pioneer* that I have not the least desire to get England *strafed*. I have too much regard for many of the fine things that England has stood for to nurse any such wish and I believe that the great majority of the English people are themselves exploited by small groups. But I do believe that natural laws will speedily put an end to the British Empire and imperialism and capitalism and I wish to help in the process.

FURTHER CRITICISMS

It is well to bear in mind that news agencies and newspapers are functioning to-day in a peculiar way and live in continual fear of government displeasure. They seldom publish all the news sent to them and it is very unsafe to pass judgment on the incomplete data provided by them.

Under present circumstances I am wholly opposed to a withdrawal or suspension of direct action because this inevitably means liquidating our present struggle and turning mass attention to some form of compromise with British imperialism. I think that under present conditions in India and the world this would be a betrayal of the cause. Small groups here and there who talk in terms of an advanced ideology will have little, if any, effect on the mass demoralization which will be produced by our abandoning the civil disobedience movement. We would then drift away from the current of world change, which grows more powerful day by day, and settle down in a stagnant back water. The opportunities that may come over way will find us lacking and unprepared.

Even from the point of view of consolidating and preparing our organizations and position for a mass struggle, it seems to me to be folly to expect that a withdrawal of the movement will give us this opportunity unless this consolidation means parlour talk and no action. Surely, the Government will not willingly give us a chance of building up our strength and will pick out all our active and effective

workers and try to disable them. This process of individual disablement, added to the loss of morale involved in a giving up of the present struggle, must result in utter mass demoralization and an inability to do anything effective for a considerable time. It is far easier to build up and consolidate our position and develop an ideology in course of a struggle than in the demoralized condition that follows an ending of it. Events teach the masses more than individual effort, and a struggle, whether national or social, produces these mighty teachers. But, of course, there must be right direction.

I am quite sure that the only alternative to a continuation of our present struggle is some measure of co-operation with imperialism. Individuals and groups here and there may talk bravely but their talk will end in empty nothing so far as mass action is concerned. Personally, I am not prepared, and there are many who think like me, for any such compromise, whatever happens. It is better for the cause, I am convinced, that we should carry on the fight and even be crushed to atoms rather than that we should compromise with imperialism. But we have no intention of being crushed.

An ideology is presumed to lead to action and action on a mass scale. If such action is meant for the whole of India, the ideology cannot (except as the ultimate aim) ignore present day objective facts and conditions all over the country. The question each one of us has to answer is this: Are we to prepare for some distant future struggle for a problematic freedom in the hereafter, or do we consider that objective conditions in the country and the world are such that the struggle is here and now, or in the near future, and we have to face it. If we adopt the latter

answer, as I think we must, then we must carry on the struggle and try to shape it and try to develop a new ideology through it and in the course of it.

World events of the past decade or more have many lessons to teach us. There is the pitiful and miserable failure of social democracy in England, Germany and other countries. There is also the failure to make good or to rouse the masses, inspite of suitable economic conditions of the communist parties of various countries (excluding the Soviet Union). In most countries communism is represented by three or four different groups or parties, each cursing and slandering the other, wholly incapable of united action, and often forgetting the common foe in their mutual hatreds. It is perfectly clear that however correct the ideology of the Communist International may have been, their tactics have failed.

In India we see, during the past thirteen years, a subservient and demoralised people, incapable of any action and much less united action, suddenly develop backbone and power of resistance and an amazing capacity for united action, and challenge the might of a great and entrenched empire. Is this a little thing that we have achieved? Or is it not one of the most remarkable examples of mass regeneration? And are we not entitled to claim that the methods that brought about this great change were worthy and desirable methods? Those who criticise these methods might well compare the achievement of India during these years with that of any other colonial and semi-colonial country. They might also compare the achievements of others in India trying to work differently or with a braver ideology.

It would be a good thing if some of our critics made a

grand tour of India from the Khyber pass in the north to the south and east and west and studied the situation for themselves. They would find that the Congress is not only not defunct but is very much alive and functioning in many areas, and is going to function despite anything that might happen. They would discover the strange ferment in the peasantry and the new temper of the army. One is a little apt to misjudge India by conditions prevailing in a city, especially when our newspapers do not even publish the news. How many people know of the recent extraordinary happenings in the Frontier Province? Or of the fact that about eight hundred people have gone to prison in Behar alone during the last two months or so? Or of the stream of individuals that are offering civil disobedience in other provinces? Or of the *sarkar salaam* and other barbarities that are taking place in Bengal? I could add to the list. The mere fact that the these amazing methods of repression are being resorted to still is proof enough of the strength of our movement and the nervous and fearful state of Government. Why should it resort to these extraordinary methods if it felt that there was no life left in our movement?

I have been told that I stand for a federation with the princes and feudal lords without in any way questioning their despotism. This is a somewhat remarkable interpretation of what I have said. Certainly I think that a federation is likely to be established in the India that is to be, but I cannot conceive of any stable federation, certainly not one to which I can agree, to which the feudal chiefs are parties. I believe that the whole Indian State system must go root and branch.

Probably reference was made to the Delhi Provisional

Settlement of 1931. A Federation was certainly agreed to there but the nature of it was not defined. In any event the Delhi Settlement is no more. The Government has put an end to it and we are no longer bound by its terms.

It might be as well to remember that I am not the Congress and the Congress is not Jawaharlal Nehru. It has been my great privilege to work in the Congress for the best years of my life and perhaps sometimes I have had a little influence over its decisions. But I am not presumptuous enough to imagine that I can carry the Congress with me wherever I will. I have long felt that the Congress is far the most effective radical organisation in the country and it is easier to work great changes in the mass mentality through it rather than through any other means. So long as I feel that I shall gladly and most willingly work with this great organization, which has done so much for the country, even though it may not go far enough from my point of view. And so long as that is the case no question can arise of my thinking of another organization.

People forget sometimes that we are functioning abnormally. They discuss the constitutional issue in terms of normality or they criticise the Congress for its seeming inactivity, forgetting that the Congress has arrived at a certain stage of historical growth. It is not at present a constitutional or legal body and many of the safe and brave deeds that are performed on public platforms are no longer in its line. Constitutionalists naturally dislike this; they cannot function in an illegal atmosphere. But why should those who think in terms of revolutionary change object to this inevitable and desirable development?

HINDU MAHASABHA AND COMMUNALISM

Extracts from a speech delivered at the Benares Hindu University on November 12, 1933

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, addressing last night a crowded meeting of Hindu University students condemned strongly the recent activities of the Hindu Mahasabha. He said he had long been of opinion that the Hindu Mahasabha was a small reactionary group pretending to speak on behalf of the Hindus of India of whom it was very far from being representative. Nonetheless misapprehensions were created by their high-sounding title and resounding phrases and it was time that these misapprehensions were removed. Nothing in recent months pained him quite so much as the activities of the Mahasabha group culminating in the resolutions passed at Ajmer.

Going a few steps further the Arya Kumar Sabha which was presumably an off-shoot of the Hindu Mahasabha, had proclaimed its policy to be one of elimination of Muslims and Christians from India and the establishment of a Hindu Raj. This statement makes clear what the pretensions of the Mahasabha about Indian nationalism amount to. Under cover of seeming nationalism, the Mahasabha not only hides the rankest and narrowest communalism but also desires to preserve the vested interests of a group of big Hindu landlords and the princes. The policy of the Mahasabha as declared by its responsible leaders is one of cooperation with the foreign Government so

that their favouring (fawning ?) to it and abasing themselves before it might result in a few crumbs coming in their way. This is betrayal of the freedom struggle, denial of every vestige of nationalism and suppression of every manly instinct in the Hindus. The Mahasabha showed its attachment to vested interests by openly condemning every form of socialism and social change. Anything more degrading, reactionary, anti-national, anti-progressive and harmful than the present policy of the Hindu Mahasabha it was difficult to imagine. The leaders of the Mahasabha must realize that the inevitable consequence of this policy of their lining up with the enemies of Indian freedom and most reactionary elements in the country is for the rest of India, Hindu and non-Hindu, to face them squarely and oppose them and treat them as enemies of freedom and all we are striving for. It is not a mere matter of condemnation and disassociation, though of course there must be both these, but one of active and persistent opposition to the most opportunist and stupid of policies.

HINDU AND MUSLIM COMMUNALISM

My recent remarks on Hindu communalists and the Hindu Mahasabha have evidently touched a sensitive spot of many people and have produced strong reactions. For many days every morning the newspapers brought me a tonic in the shape of criticisms and condemnations and I must express my gratitude for these to all who indulged in them. It is not given to everybody to see himself as others see him, and since this privilege has been accorded to me and my numerous failings in education, up-bringing, heredity, culture, as well as those for which I am personally responsible, pointed out to me gently, I must needs feel grateful. I shall try to profit by the chiding I have received but I am afraid I have outgrown the age when the background of one's thought and action can be easily changed.

I have not hastened to reply to the criticisms because I thought it as well for excitement to cool so that we might consider the question dispassionately and without reference to personalities. It is a vital question for all of us Indians, and especially for those who from birth or choice are in the Hindu fold.

But I must begin with an expression of regret and apology. It is clear that some of us were the victims of a hoax in regard to the alleged resolution of the Arya Kumar Sabha which was sent to us and in which it was stated that there could be no peace in India so long as

there were any Muslims or Christians in the country. It has been demonstrated that no such resolution was passed by the Arya Kumar Sabha at Ajmer or elsewhere; indeed no resolution of a political nature was passed by that body at all. I am exceedingly sorry for having permitted myself to fall into a trap of some one's devising and I desire to express my deep regret to the Arya Kumar Sabha.

I must also express my regret both to the Arya Kumar Sabha and the Hindu Mahasabha for having presumed that they were associated with each other.

In regard to my main contention, however, I confess that I am unrepentant and I hold still that the activities of Hindu communal organizations, including the Mahasabha, have been communal, anti-national and reactionary. Of course this cannot apply to all the members of these organizations; it can only apply to the majority group in them or the group that controls them. Organizations also change their policies from time to time and what may be true today may not have been wholly true yesterday. So far as I have been able to gather, Hindu communal organizations, especially in the Punjab and in Sind, have been progressively becoming more narrowly communal and anti-national and politically reactionary.

I am told that this is a consequence of Muslim communalism and reactionary policy and I have been chided for not blaming Muslim communalists. I have already pointed out that it would have been entirely out of place for me, speaking to a Hindu audience, to draw attention to Muslim communalists and reactionaries. It would have been preaching to the converted as the average Hindu is well aware of them. It is far more difficult to see one's own faults than to see the failings of others. I also hold

that it serves little purpose, in the prevailing atmosphere of mutual suspicion, to preach to the other community, although of course, whenever necessity arises, facts must be faced and the truth stated.

I do not think that the Muslim communal organizations, chief among whom are the Muslim All Parties Conference and the Muslim League, represent any large group of Muslims in India except in the sense that they exploit the prevailing communal sentiment. But the fact remains that they claim to speak for Muslims and no other organization has so far risen which can successfully challenge that claim. Their aggressively communal character gives them a pull over the large number of nationalist Muslims who merge themselves in the Congress. The leaders of these organizations are patently and intensely communal. That, from the very nature of things, one can understand. But it is equally obvious that most of them are definitely anti-national and political reactionaries of the worst kind. Apparently they do not even look forward to any common nation developing in India. At a meeting in the British House of Commons last year the Aga Khan, Sir Mohammad Iqbal and Dr. Shafaat Ahmad Khan are reported (in the 'Statesman' of December 31, 1932) to have laid stress on "the inherent impossibility of securing any merger of Hindu and Muslim, political, or indeed social, interests". The speakers further pointed out "the impracticability of ever governing India through anything but a British agency". These statements leave no loophole for nationalism or for Indian freedom, now or even in the remote future.

I do not think that these statements represent the views of Muslims generally or even of most of the communally inclined Muslims. But they are undoubtedly the views of

the dominant and politically clamorous group among the Muslims. It is an insult to one's intelligence to link these views with those of nationalism and freedom and of course any measure of real economic freedom is still further away from them. Essentially, this is an attitude of pure reaction —political, cultural, national, social. And it is not surprising that this should be so if one examines the membership of these organizations. Most of the leading members are government officials, ex-officials, ministers, would-be ministers, knights and title holders, big landlords etc. Their leader is the Aga Khan, the head of a wealthy religious group, who continues in himself, most remarkably, the feudal order and the politics and habits of the British ruling class, with which he has been intimately associated for many years.

Such being the leadership of the Muslims in India and at the Round Table Conference it is no wonder that their attitude should be reactionary. This reactionary policy went so far as to lead many of the Muslim delegates in London to seek an alliance with the most reactionary elements in British public life—Lord Lloyd and Company. And the final touch was given to it when Gandhiji offered personally to accept every single one of their communal demands, however illogical and exaggerated they might be, on condition that they assured him of their full support in the political struggle for independence. That condition and offer was not accepted and it became clear that what stood in the way was not even communalism but political reaction.

Personally I think that it is generally possible to co-operate with communalists provided the political objective is the same. But between progress and reaction, between

those who struggle for freedom and those who are content with servitude, and even wish to prolong it, there is no meeting ground. And it is this political reaction which has stalked the land under cover of communalism and taken advantage of the fear of each community of the other. It is the fear complex that we have to deal with in these communal problems. Honest communalism is fear; false communalism is political reaction.

To some extent this fear is justified, or is at least understandable, in a minority community. We see this fear overshadowing the communal sky in India as a whole so far as Muslims are concerned; we see it as an equally potent force in the Punjab and Sind so far as the Hindus are concerned, and in the Punjab the Sikhs.

It was natural for the British government to support and push on the reactionary leaders of the Muslims and to try to ignore the nationalist ones. It was also natural for them to accede to most of their demands in order to strengthen their position in their own community and weaken the national struggle. A very little knowledge of history will show that this has always been done by ruling powers. The Muslim demands did not in any way lessen the control of the British in India. To some extent they helped the British to add to their proposed special powers and to show to the world how necessary their continued presence in India was.

I have written all this about the attitude of the Muslim communalist leaders not only to complete the picture but because it is a necesary preliminary to the understanding of the Hindu communal attitude. There is no essential difference between the two. But there was this difference that the Congress drew into its ranks most of the vital elements

of Hindu society and it dominated the situations and thus circumstances did not permit the Hindu communalists to play an important role in politics. The Hindu Mahasabha leaders largely confined themselves to criticising the Congress. When however there was a lull in Congress activities, automatically the Hindu communalists came more to the front and their attitude was frankly reactionary.

It must be remembered that the communalism of a majority community must of necessity bear a closer resemblance to nationalism than the communalism of a minority group. One of the best tests of its true nature is what relation it bears to the national struggle. If it is politically reactionary or lays stress on communal problems rather than national ones, then it is obviously anti-national.

The Simon Commission, as is well known, met with a widespread and almost unanimous boycott in India. Bhai Parmanandji, in his recent presidential address at Ajmer, says that this boycott was unfortunate for the Hindus, and he approvingly mentions that the Punjab Hindus (probably under his guidance) cooperated with the commission. Thus Bhaiji is of opinion that, whatever the natural aspect of the question might have been, it was desirable for the Hindus to cooperate with the British Government in order to gain some communal advantages. This is obviously an anti-national attitude. Even from the narrow communal point of view it is difficult to see its wisdom, for communal advantages can only be given at the expense of another community, and when both seek the favours of the ruling power, there is little chance of obtaining even a superficial advantage.

Bhaiji's argument, repeatedly stated, is that the British government is so strongly entrenched in India that it can-

not be shaken by any popular movement and therefore it is folly to try to do so. The only alternative is to seek its favours. That is an argument which I can only characterize, with all respect to him, as wholly unworthy of any people however fallen they might be.

Bhaiji's view is that the cry of Hindu-Muslim unity is a false cry and a wrong ideal to aim at because the power of gift is in the hands of the government. Granting this power of gift, every cry other than one of seeking the government's favours is futile. And if the possibility of Hindu-Muslim cooperation and collaboration is ruled out, nationalism is also ruled out in the country-wide sense of the word. The inevitable consequence, and Bhaiji accepts this, is what he calls "Hindu nationalism", which is but another name for Hindu communalism. What is the way to this? Cooperation with British imperialism. "I feel an impulse within me", says Bhaiji in his presidential address, "that the Hindus would willingly cooperate with Great Britain if their status and responsible position as the premier community in India is recognized in the political institutions of new India."

This attitude of trying to combine with the ruling power against another community or group is the natural and only policy which communalism can adopt. It fits in of course entirely with the wishes of the ruling power which can then play off one group against another. It was the policy which was adopted by the Muslim communalists with some apparent temporary advantage to themselves. It is the policy which the Hindu Mahasabha partly favoured from its earliest days but could not adopt wholeheartedly because of the pressure of nationalist Hindus, and which its leaders now seems to have definitely adopted.

Dr. Moonje, presiding over the C. P. Hindu Conference on May 17, 1933 made it clear that "the Mahasabha never had any faith in the kind of non-cooperation which Mahatma Gandhi has been preaching and practising. It believes in the eternal Sanatan Law of stimulus and response, namely, responsive cooperation. The Mahasabha holds that whatever may be the constitution of the legislatures, they should never be boycotted." Dr. Moonje is an authority on 'Sanatan Law', but I hope it does not lay down that the response to a kick should be grovelling at the feet of him who kicks. This speech was made when a widespread national struggle was going on and there was unprecedented repression under the Ordinance regime. I shall not discuss here the wisdom of stating, long before the British made constitution had taken shape, that whatever happens they would work it. Was this not an invitation to the government to ignore the Mahasabha for in any event it would accept the new dispensation?

Dr. Moonje himself went to the Round Table Conference in 1930, at the height of the Civil Disobedience Movement, though in justice to him it must be stated that he had declared that he went in his individual capacity. Subsequently of course the Mahasabha took full part in the London conferences and committees.

Of the part taken by the Mahasabha representatives in these deliberations, especially by those from the Punjab and Sind, I wish only to say that it was a most painful one. Politically it was most reactionary and efforts were made to increase the reserved powers and safeguards of the British government or the governors in order to prevent the Muslim majorities in certain provinces from exercising effective power. The identical policy and argument of the Muslim

communalists in regard to the whole of India were repeated by Hindu communalists in regard to certain provinces. But of course the special powers of governors were not going to be confined to some provinces. They would inevitably apply to all the provinces. The reason for this reactionary attitude in both the cases was of course fear of the majority. Whatever the reason, this played entirely into the hands of the British government.

The whole of the case of the Sind Hindu Sabha is a negation of the principle of democracy, except in so far as joint electorates are demanded. It is an attempt to prevent the will of the majority from prevailing because the minority might suffer. The anti-social arguments of greater wealth and education of the minority are advanced, and financial reasons based entirely on the continuation of the top-heavy British system are made a prop. Wealth and economic control are not only sufficient protection under modern conditions, but have to be protected against. Almost every argument that has been advanced by the Sind Hindu communalists can be advanced by the Muslim minority in India as a whole with this difference that the Hindus are generally the richer and more educated community and have thus greater economic power.

In the attempts to show the backwardness of the Muslims in Sind the Sind Hindu Sabha memorandum to the Joint Parliamentary Committee has made sweeping statements about Muslims which are astonishing and most painful to read. They remind one of Katherine Mayo's methods of denunciation.

I do not know what the Punjab Hindu Sewak Sabha is. Probably it is not connected with the Hindu Sabha, and it may only be a mushroom growth fathered by our

benign government. On the eve of Bhai Parmanand's departure for England last May, to give evidence before the Joint Committee, this Sabha sent him a message which laid stress on the retention of safeguards by governors in order to protect the Hindus of the Punjab. "The only thing", it said, "that can protect the Punjab Hindus is the effective working of safeguards as provided in the constitution." "Let not any endeavours of the politicians lead to the abrogation of these safeguards ..... The judicious discharge of their special responsibility by our Governors has been greatly helpful."

Another organization, of which I know nothing, the 'Punjab Hindu Youth League' of Lahore, stated as follows in a public statement dated May 29, 1933: "We feel that the time has now come for unity not so much between Moslems and Hindus as between the British and Indians .. Hindu leaders....should insist on having safeguards for the Hindu minority in the constitutions and cabinets."

I cannot hold the Mahasabha responsible for these statements but as a matter of fact they fit in with, and are only a slight elaboration of, the Mahasabha attitude. And they bear out that many Hindu communalists are definitely thinking on the lines of cooperation with British imperialism in the hope of getting favours. It requires little argument to show that this attitude is not only narrowly communal but also anti-national and intensely reactionary. If this is the attitude when the Hindu Mahasabha feels that it has lost all along the line, in so far as the Communal Award is concerned, one wonders what its attitude will be when a petty favour is shown to it by The Government.

It is perfectly true that the Hindu Mahasabha has stood

for joint electorates right through its career and this is obviously the only national solution of the problem. It is also true that the Communal Award is an utter negation of nationalism and is meant to separate India into communal compartments and give strength to disruptive tendencies and thus to strengthen the hold of British imperialism. But it must be borne in mind that nationalism cannot be accepted only when it profits the majority community. The test comes in the provinces where there is a Muslim majority and in that test the Hindu Mahasabha has failed.

Nor is it enough to blame Muslim communalists. It is easy enough to do so for Indian Muslims as a whole are unhappily very backward and compare unfavourably with Muslims in all other countries. The point is that a special responsibility does attach to the Hindus in India both because they are the majority community and because economically and educationally they are more advanced. The Mahasabha, instead of discharging that responsibility, has acted in a manner which has undoubtedly increased the communalism of the Muslims and made them distrust the Hindus all the more. The only way it has tried to meet their communalism is by its own variety of communalism. One communalism does not end the other; each feeds on the other and both fatten.

The Mahasabha at Ajmer has passed a long resolution on the Communal Award pointing out its obvious faults and inconsistencies. But it has not so far as I am aware said a word in criticism of the White Paper scheme. I am not personally interested in petty criticisms of that scheme because I think that it is wholly bad and is incapable of improvement. But from the Mahasabha's point of view to

ignore it was to demonstrate that it cared little, if at all, about the political aspect of Indian freedom. It thought only in terms of what the Hindus got or did not get. It has been reported that a resolution on independence was brought forward but this was apparently suppressed. Not only that, but no resolution on the political or economic objective was considered. If the Mahasabha claims to represent the Hindus of India, must it be said that the Hindus are not interested in the freedom of India?

Ordinarily this would be remarkable enough. But in present day conditions and with the background of the past few years of heroic struggle and sacrifice, such a lapse can have only one meaning—that the Mahasabha has ceased to think even in terms of nationalism and is engrossed in communal squabbles. Or it may be that the policy is a deliberate one so as to avoid irritating the Government with which the Mahasabha wishes to cooperate.

This view is strengthened by the fact that no reference is made in the resolutions or in the presidential address to the Ordinance rule and the extraordinary measures of repression which the Government has indulged in and is still indulging in. The Mahasabha seems to live in a world of its own unconnected with the struggles and desires and sufferings of the Indian people.

Even more significant was the refusal (if newspaper reports are to be credited) to pass a resolution of condolence on the death, under tragic circumstances, of Syt. J. M. Sen-Gupta. This was a harmless resolution, a formal tribute to the memory of a great patriot and a Hindu, and yet the Mahasabha sensed danger in it.

Our friends the moderates or liberals, though they may be lacking in action and though their methods and ideology

may be utterly inadequate, still consider these questions and pass resolutions on them. Not so the Mahasabha which has moved away completely from the political and national plane and rests itself solely on the communal issue, thereby weakening even its communal position. I submit that this attitude is wholly reactionary and anti-national. I have some contacts with the outside world, through foreign newspapers and other means, and I should like to tell the Mahasabha leaders that, whatever their motives or methods may have been, they have succeeded in creating a considerable amount of prejudice abroad against the Mahasabha and the communally inclined Hindus.

I cannot say what following the Hindu or Muslim communal organizations have. It is possible that in a moment of communal excitement each side may command the allegiance of considerable numbers. But I do submit that on both sides these organizations represent the rich upper class groups and the struggle for communal advantages is really an attempt of these groups to take as big a share of power and privilege for themselves as possible. At the most it means jobs for a few of our unemployed intellectuals. How do these communal demands meet the needs of the masses? What is the programme of the Hindu Mahasabha or the Muslim League for the workers, the peasants, and the lower middle classes, which form the great bulk of the nation? They have no programme except a negative one, as the Mahasabha hinted at Ajmer, of not disturbing the present social order. This in itself shows that the controlling forces of these communal organizations are the upper class possessing social groups today. The Muslim communalists tell us a great deal about the democracy of Islam but are afraid of democracy in practice;

the Hindu communalists talk of nationalism and think in terms of a 'Hindu nationalism'.

Personally I am convinced that nationalism can only come out of the ideological fusion of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and other groups in India. That does not and need not mean the extinction of any real culture of any group, but it does mean a common national outlook, to which other matters are subordinated. I do not think that Hindu-Muslim or other unity will come merely by reciting it like a *mantra*. That it will come, I have no doubt, but it will come from below, not above, for many of those above are too much interested in British domination, and hope to preserve their special privileges through it. Social and economic forces will inevitably bring other problems to the front. They will create cleavages along different lines, but the communal cleavage will go.

I have been warned by friends, whose opinion I value, that my attitude towards communal organization will result in antagonizing many people against me. That is indeed probable. I have no desire to antagonize any countryman of mine for we are in the midst of a mighty struggle against a powerful opponent. But that very struggle demands that we must check harmful tendencies and always keep the goal before us. I would be false to myself, to my friends and comrades, so many of whom have sacrificed their all at the altar of freedom, and even to those who disapprove of what I say, if I remained a silent witness to an attempt to weaken and check our great struggle for freedom. Those who, in my opinion, are helping in this attempt, may be perfectly honest in the beliefs they hold. I do not challenge their bona fides. But nonetheless the beliefs may be wrong, anti-national

and reactionary.

I write as an individual, and, in this matter, I claim to represent no one but myself. Many may agree with me; I hope they do. But whether they do so or not, I must say frankly what I have in my mind. That is not perhaps the way of politicians for in politics people are very careful of what they say and do not say lest they offend some group or individual and lose support. But I am not a politician by choice; forces stronger than me have driven me to this field and, it may be, that I have yet to learn the ways of politicians.

ALLAHABAD
November 27, 1933

A REPLY TO SIR MOHAMMAD IQBAL

I have read with care the frank and courteous statement that Sir Mohammad Iqbal has issued to the press and I gladly accept his invitation to answer the question he has formulated. But first I must refer to the incident during the communal negotiations at the second Round Table Conference, which has been mentioned by Sir Mohammad. I am obviously not in a position to say anything about it from my own knowledge, and others, who are in a better position, will no doubt clear up any misapprehensions that may have arisen. But when Sir Mohammad refers to any condition laid down by Gandhiji as an 'inhuman condition', I am quite sure that he is under a serious misapprehension.

Sir Mohammad says that Gandhiji was prepared to accept, in his personal capacity, the demands of the Muslim delegates to the Round Table Conference, but that he could not guarantee the acceptance of his position by the Congress. It seems to me obvious that Gandhiji, or any one else in his position, could not possibly adopt any other course. No representative of a democratic organization could do so. Even the Working Committee of the Congress could not go behind the Congress resolutions; it could only refer the question to the All-India Congress Committee or the open session of the Congress which is the final authority. Quite apart from the general Congress attitude, it was well known that a considerable section of

Muslim opinion in India, the Muslim Nationalists, were opposed to some of those demands. Gandhiji had repeatedly stated in India, prior to his departure for England, that he would accept the decision of Dr. M. A. Ansari as representing the Muslim Nationalists, on this question. He had further stated that if the two Muslim groups could arrive at an agreement, he would unhesitatingly accept it. In order to facilitate this he had pressed hard for the inclusion of Dr. Ansari's name among the delegates to the Round Table Conference, but this repeated request was apparently strenuously opposed by the Muslim delegates in London. In spite of all this and as a last effort to bring about some agreement, Gandhiji went to the length of committing himself personally. It is obvious that although he could not bind the Congress, his comment and pleadings would have gone a tremendous way in converting the Congress.

The second condition said to have been laid down by Gandhiji was that Muslim delegates should not support the special claims of the depressed classes. This, according to Sir Mohammad, was "an inhuman condition" as it meant that the depressed classes should continue to be kept down. This is an extraordinary conclusion. If there is one thing more than another that Gandhiji has stood for and stands for to-day, it is that the depressed classes should cease to be depressed or exploited or handicapped in any way, and that they should be on a perfect level with every other group. It was because he felt that if they were placed in a separate compartment by themselves they would have a stigma attached to them and fusion with others would become more difficult, that he opposed their separation. It is well-known that a

certain alliance was formed in London during the second Round Table Conference between the delegates of some minority groups and British Conservatives. Gandhiji evidently wanted the Muslim delegates not to support the demand for the separation of the depressed classes into a distinct group. So far as I know, he has never opposed the grant of special and additional representation to the depressed classes. Indeed, he holds that every facility must be given them to advance and catch up to the more advanced groups and communities. Subsequent events have demonstrated how far he is prepared to go in this direction. Socialist as I am, I fail to see any flaw or any impropriety in this reasoning.

Sir Mohammad evidently suspects a sinister design on Gandhiji's part. He hints that what Gandhiji is after is not so much the raising of the depressed classes, but the prevention of their fusion with the other communities, especially, I suppose, the Muslims in India. It is difficult to meet a suspicion and a prejudice which has little reason behind it, but any one who knows Gandhiji at all will consider the suggestion that he is working for the Harijan movement with a political motive as absurd. Personally, I am not interested in religious labels and I am sure that they will soon disappear, or, at any rate, cease to have any political significance. Sir Mohammad evidently still attaches political significance to them. Gandhiji, to my knowledge, does not, but he is certainly a man of religion and he believes in the essentials of the Hindu faith. He wants to restore these essentials and to sweep away the accretions. It is because he feels that untouchability is a degrading and a disgusting accretion that he fights against it. It is quite wrong to say that he does not want a fusion

between the depressed classes and caste Hindus. Indeed he wants this as well as a fusion between both of these and the other communities in India. But, like Sir Mohammad, he is enamoured of certain basic essential of culture and he wants to preserve these and at the same time to give perfect freedom to other cultural forms.

Personally my outlook is different. It is not religious and I find it difficult to think of groups in terms of religion. Sir Mohammad evidently does so to the exclusion of other and more modern ways of thinking, and I am afraid he confuses religion with race and culture. Perhaps it is because of this that he advances a biological argument which I entirely fail to understand. Having condemned Gandhiji for a fancied attempt to prevent the fusion of the depressed classes with other communities he says that in his opinion a fusion of the different communities in India is a chimerical notion and the sooner the idea is given up the better.

The question whether biological fusion of different groups in India is going to take place or not raises a host of issues and is chiefly interesting from the point of view of eugenics and culture. It is not, directly, a political question and present interest in it can only be academic. I think that it is inevitable that we should go towards such fusion but I cannot say when it is likely to become an accomplished fact.

But what has this got to do with the communal issue? Are Muslims or Sikhs or Indian Christians, as religious groups, biologically different from the Hindus as a group? Are we different species of animals or of *homo sapiens*? There are racial and cultural differences in India but these

senses. But for the present I shall try to use these words in Sir Mohammad's sense.

I am not prepared to leave the decision of any vital matter affecting India or the Indian people to any outside authority, and certainly not to the Imperialist power that governs us and exploits our weaknesses and differences. I agree that the majority community should 'concede the minimum safeguards necessary for the protection of a minority.' But what are these minimum safeguards and who is to decide them? The minority itself? As a general rule I am prepared to agree to this also, though there may be exceptions when vital matters affecting the nation are concerned. We may, for the present, rule out these exceptions. How then are we to know what the minority community really desires? Are we to take the opinion of any small group claiming to represent the community? And when there are several such groups, what are we to do? Neither the Muslim League nor the Muslim Conference can claim to be democratic or representative bodies and a considerable number of Muslims are opposed to their demands. The Council of the Muslim League—apparently the Council exists in the air and there is no other body behind it—is a more or less permanent, self-electing or nominating body. The Muslim Conference is dominated by its very constitution by the Muslim members of the official legislatures. How can these bodies claim to represent the Muslims generally in India and, more specially, the Muslim masses? They may occasionally give expression to a prevailing sentiment. Then again are we to consider a group of persons, chosen by the ruling Imperialist power for the Round Table Conference, as representatives

of the Muslim masses? They may be estimable persons, but they certainly have no representative capacity.

The only way to find out the wishes of the Muslims of India is to consult them and the democratic method is for them to elect representative for the purpose of as wide a franchise as possible, preferably adult franchise. I am perfectly prepared to abide by any decision of theirs so arrived at.

I should like Sir Mohammad Iqbal to consider his fourteen points which are supposed to provide the minimum safeguards necessary for the protection of the Muslims, and to spot anything in them which benefits or raises up the Muslim masses. As he knows, my chief interest in politics is the raising of the masses and the removal of barriers of class and wealth and the equalization of society. This point of view was apparently never considered by the framers and advocates of the fourteen points. It is natural that I should not feel enthusiastic about them. But if the Muslims declare for them in the democratic way I have suggested, I shall accept these demands and I am quite sure that they would be accepted by the nation as a whole. I imagine, however, that when the Muslim masses are consulted they will lay far more stress on economic demands which affect them as well as the non-Muslim masses intimately rather than on such demands as interest a handful of upper class people.

The political problem of India can only be decided by the Indian people themselves without the intervention of an outside authority, so also the communal problem. And the only way to proceed in regard to both of these is to go

to the people themselves. A Constituent Assembly elected on an adult or near-adult franchise alone can decide the political issue. I am personally prepared to have elections for this Assembly by separate electorates for those minorities who so desire it. The representatives of these minorities, so elected, will have every right to speak for them and no one can say that the majority community has influenced their election. Let these people consider the communal question and, as I have stated above, I shall accept the demand put forward by the Muslim representatives.

Sir Muhammad will observe that I am placing before him a democratic and feasible solution of the problem and I am even keeping the Congress out of it. I am sure the Congress will gladly efface itself if this solution is put forward.

My answer to Sir Mohammad Iqbal's question therefore is this. I do not think that these are the only two alternatives he mentions. There are many other avenues. In any event he ought to know full well, that if any community, majority or minority, seeks an alliance with imperialism, it will have to face the unrelenting and continuous opposition and hostility of Indian nationalism. As a matter of fact, no community or minority, can do so. Only a few leaders and upper class people may do so, for every community as a whole suffers from it. The masses can never compromise with imperialism for their only hope lies in freedom from its shackles.

Nor do I believe in the religious distribution of India. Such divisions are most undesirable and cannot take place in the modern world. But I am not against redistribution

or reshaping of different provinces which will give different cultural groups the fullest opportunity for self-development.

ALLAHABAD
December 11, 1933

REALITY AND MYTH

The suggestion made by me that both the political and communal problems in India should be solved by means of a Constituent Assembly has met with considerable favour. Gandhiji has commended it and so have many others. Others again have misunderstood it or not taken the trouble to understand it.

Politically and nationally, if it is granted, as it must be, that the people of India are to be the sole arbiters of India's fate and must therefore have full freedom to draw up their constitution, it follows that this can only be done by means of a Constituent Assembly elected on the widest franchise. Those who believe in independence have no other choice. Even those who talk vaguely in terms of a nebulous Dominion Status must agree that the decision has to be made by the Indian people. How then is this decision to be made? Not by a group of so-called leaders or individuals. Not by those self-constituted bodies called All Parties Conferences which represent, if any body at all, small interested groups and leave out the vast majority of the population. Not even, let us admit, by the National Congress, powerful and largely representative as it is. It is of course open to the Congress to influence and largely control the Constituent Assembly if it can carry the people with it. But the ultimate political decision must lie with the people of India acting through a popularly elected Constituent Assembly.

This Assembly of course can have nothing in common with the sham and lifeless Councils and Assemblies imposed on us by an alien authority. It must derive its sanction from the people themselves without any outside interference. I have suggested that it should be elected under adult or near-adult franchise. What the method of election should be can be considered and decided later. Personally I favour the introduction, as far as possible, of the functional system of election as this is far more representative of real interests. The geographical system often covers up and confuses these interests. But I am prepared to agree to either or to a combination of both. I see no difficulty, except one, and that is an important one, in the way of such a Constituent Assembly being elected and functioning. This functioning will be limited to drawing up of a constitution and then fresh elections will have to be held on the basis of the new constitution.

The one difficulty I referred to is the presence and dominance of an outside authority, that is the British Government. It is clear that so long as this dominance continues no real Constituent Assembly can meet or function. So that an essential preliminary is the development of sufficient strength in the nation to be able to enforce the will of the Indian people. Two opposing wills cannot prevail at the same time; there must be conflict between them and a struggle for dominance, such as we see today in India. Essentially, this struggle is for the preservation of British vested interests in India and the White Paper effort is an attempt to perpetuate them. No Constituent Assembly can be bound down by these chains, and so long as the nation has not developed strength enough to break these chains, such an Assembly cannot

function.

This Assembly would also deal with the communal problem, and I have suggested that, in order to remove all suspicion from the minds of a minority, it may even, if it so chooses, have its representatives elected by separate electorates. These separate electorates would only be for the Constituent Assembly. The future method of election, as well as all other matters connected with the constitution, would be settled by the Assembly itself.

I have further added that if the Muslim elected representatives for this Constituent Assembly adhere to certain communal demands I shall press for their acceptance. Much as I dislike communalism I realise that it does not disappear by suppression but by a removal of the feeling of fear, or by a diversion of interests. We should therefore remove this fear complex and make the Muslim masses realise that they can have any protection that they really desire. I feel that this realisation will go a long way in toning down the feeling of communalism.

But I am convinced that the real remedy lies in a diversion of interest from the myths that have been fostered and have grown up round the communal question to the realities of today. The bulwark of communalism today is political reaction and so we find that communal leaders inevitably tend to become reactionaries in political and economic matters. Groups of upper class people try to cover up their own class interests by making it appear that they stand for the communal demands of religious minorities or majorities. A critical examination of the various communal demands put forward on behalf of Hindus, Muslims or others reveals that they have nothing to do with the masses. At the most they deal

with some jobs for a few of the unemployed intellectuals but it is obvious that the problem even of the unemployed middle class intellectuals cannot be solved by a re-distribution of State jobs. There are far too many unemployed persons of the middle class to be absorbed in state or other service and their number is growing at a rapid pace. So far as the masses are concerned there is absolutely no reference to them or to their wants in the numerous demands put forward by communal organizations. Apparently the communalists do not consider them as worthy of attention. What is there, in the various communal formulae, in regard to the distress of the agriculturists, their rent or revenue or the staggering burden of debt that crushes them? Or in regard to the factory or railway or other workers who have to face continuous cuts in wages and a vanishing standard of living? Or the lower middle classes who for want of employment and work are sinking in the slough of despair? Heated arguments take place about seats in councils and separate and joint electorates and the separation of provinces which can affect or interest only a few. Is the starving peasant likely to be interested in this when hunger gnaws his stomach? But our communal friends take good care to avoid these real issues, for a solution of them might affect their own interests, and they try to divert people's attention to entirely unreal and, from the mass point of view, trivial matters.

Communalism is essentially a hunt for favours from a third party—the ruling power. The communalist can only think in terms of a continuation of foreign domination and he tries to make the best of it for his own particular group. Delete the foreign power and com-

munal arguments and demands fall to the ground. Both the foreign power and the communalists, as representing some upper class groups, want no essential change of the political and economic structure; both are interested in the preservation and augmentation of their vested interests. Because of this, both cannot tackle the real economic problems which confront the country, for a solution of these would upset the present social structure and divest the vested interests. For both, this ostrich-like policy of ignoring real issues is bound to end in disaster. Facts and economic forces are more powerful than governments and empires and can only be ignored at peril.

Communalism thus becomes another name for political and social reaction and the British Government, being the citadel of this reaction in India, naturally throws its sheltering wings over a useful ally. Many a false trail is drawn to confuse the issue; we are told of Islamic culture and Hindu culture, of religion and old custom, of ancient glories and the like. But behind all this lies political and social reaction, and communalism must therefore be fought on all fronts and given no quarter. Because the inward nature of communalism has not been sufficiently realised, it has often sailed under false colours and taken in many an unwary person. It is an undoubted fact that many a Congressman has almost unconsciously partly succumbed to it and tried to reconcile his nationalism with this narrow and reactionary creed. A real appreciation of its true nature would demonstrate that there can be no common ground between the two. They belong to different species. It is time that Congressmen and others who have flirted with Hindu or Muslim or Sikh or any other communalism should understand this position and

make their choice. No one can have it both ways, and the choice lies between political and social progress and stark reaction. An association with any form of communalism means the strengthening of the forces of reaction and of British imperialism in India; it means opposition to social and economic change and a toleration of the present terrible distress of our people; it means a blind ignoring of world forces and events.

What are communal organizations? They are not religious although they confine themselves to religious groups and exploit the name of religion. They are not cultural and have done nothing for culture although they talk bravely of a past culture. They are not ethical or moral groups for their teachings are singularly devoid of all ethics and morality. They are certainly not economic groupings for there is no economic link binding their members and they have no shadow of an economic programme. Some of them claim not to be political even. What then are they?

As a matter of fact they function politically and their demands are political, but calling themselves non-political, they avoid the real issues and only succeed in obstructing the path of others. If they are political organizations then we are entitled to know exactly how they stand. Do they stand for the complete freedom of India or a partial freedom, if such a thing exists? Do they stand for independence or what is called dominion status? The best of words are apt to be misleading and many people still think that dominion status is something next door to independence. As a matter of fact they are two different types entirely, two roads going in opposite directions. It is not a question of fourteen annas and sixteen annas

but of different species of coins which are not interchangeable.

Dominion status means continuing in the steel frame work of British finance and vested interests; from this strangle hold there is no relief under dominion status. Independence means a possibility of relief from these burdens and the freedom to decide about our own social structure. Therefore whatever measure of limited freedom we may get under dominion status it will always be subject to the paramount claims of the Bank of England and British capital, and it will also be subject to the continuation of our present economic structure. That means that we cannot solve our economic problems and relieve the masses of their crushing burdens; we can only sink deeper and deeper into the morass. What then do the communal organizations stand for: independence or dominion status?

We need not refer to that travesty of a constitution which the White Paper is supposed to embody. It is only an ungentle reminder to us that British capital and interests in India will be preserved at all costs, so long as the British Government has power to preserve them. Only those who are interested in the preservation of these British vested interests or those who are very simple and unsophisticated can go anywhere near the White Paper or its offshoots.

Even more important than the political objective is the economic objective. It is notorious that the era of politics has passed away and we live in an age when economics dominate national and international affairs. What have the communal organizations to say in regard to these economic matters? Or are they blissfully ignorant of the

hunger and unemployment that darken the horizon of the masses as well as of the lower middle classes? If they claim to represent the masses they must know that the all absorbing problem before these unfortunate and unhappy millions is the problem of hunger, and they should have some answer, some theoretical solution at least, for this problem. What do they propose should be done in industry and in agriculture? How do they solve the distress of the worker and the peasant; what land laws do they suggest? What is to happen to the debt of the agricultural classes; is it to be liquidated or merely toned down, or is it to remain? What of unemployment? Do they believe in the present capitalist order of society or do they think in terms of a new order? These are a few odd questions that arise and an aswer to them, as well as to other similar questions, will enlighten us as to the true inwardness of the claims and demands of the communalists. Even more so I think will the masses be enlightened if the answers manage to reach them. The Muslim masses are probably even poorer than the Hindu masses but the 'Fourteen Points' say nothing about these povercy stricken Muslims. The Hindu communalists also lay all their stress on the preservation of their own vested interests and ignore their own masses.

I am afraid I am not likely to get clear, or perhaps any, answers to my questions, because the questions are inconvenient, partly because the communal leaders know little about economic facts and have never thought in terms of the masses. They are expert only in percentages and their battle ground is the conference room, not the field or factory or market place. But whether they like them or not the questions will force themselves to the front and those who cannot answer them effectively will

find little place for themselves in public affairs. The answer of many of us can be given in one comprehensive word—socialism—and in the socialist structure of society.

But whether socialism or communism is the right answer or some other, one thing is certain—that the answer must be in terms of economics and not merely politics. For India and the world are oppressed by economic problems and there is no escaping them. So long as the fullest economic freedom does not come to us, there can be no freedom whatever the political structure may be. Economic freedom must of course include political freedom. That is the reality today; all else is myth and delusion, and there is no greater myth than the communal myth.

To go back to the Constituent Assembly. If a really popular Assembly met with freedom to face and decide the real issues, immediately these real economic problems would occupy attention. The so-called communal problem will fade into the background for the masses will be far more interested in filling their hungry stomachs than in questions of percentages. This Assembly will release the vital forces in the country which are at present suppressed by our foreign rulers as well as by Indian vested interests. The lead will go to the masses and the masses, when free, though they may sometimes err, think in terms of reality and have no use for myths. The workers and the peasantry will dominate the situation, and their decisions, imperfect though they be, will take us a long way to freedom. I cannot say what the Constituent Assembly will decide. But I have faith in the masses and am willing to abide by their decision. And I am sure that the communal problem will cease to exist when it is put to the

hard test of real mass opinion. It has been a hot house growth nurtured in the heated atmosphere of conference rooms and so-called All Parties' Conferences. It will not find a solution in that artificial environment, but it will wilt and die in the fresh air and the sunlight.

ALLAHABAD
January 4, 1934

A WINDOW IN PRISON

The high walls of a prison shut one off effectively from the outside world of change and movement. A prisoner's horizon is the top of these walls and the only expanse he sees is the blue expanse of the heavens above him. But sometimes a benevolent and considerate government provides him with little windows from which he can survey the wide world beyond. They are narrow and coloured, these tiny windows in prison, and they are apt to give a restricted and distorted vision. But none the less they afford some amusement and are welcome in the dull monotony of prison life.

One such window is *The Statesman* the "most widely read news-paper in all India." Daily, Mondays excepted, it used to bring an air of romance to us, a breath of optimism to cheer us up. And through this many coloured window we saw a distressful world struggling in the octopus-grip of depression and conflict and doubt and uncertainty; but in this sorry world there was one bright spot, the land of India, sheltered from all ills by the British Government. Here was the fabled and far-famed land of Cockaigne, where every crow was a peacock and every goose a swan; here strong silent men, floating serenely and majestically in the upper regions, like imperial eagles, protected the land and only swooped down occasionally to rid it of human rats and other noxious animals; here every man in authority was a Solon, and every knighted

fool a statesman; here, one could almost feel, but for the irritating antics of certain miserable, blind and ungrateful human beings, that all was for the best under this best of all possible governments.

It was a pleasant thought that when all the rest of the world was awry and many of its thinkers were on the verge of despair and did not know where to find a remedy, there was in India this green oasis of self-confidence and self-praise amongst our rulers, and thought and new ideas were considered undesirable and unnecessary commodities. Such was the general view we had in prison through our little window.

Sometimes, not infrequently, humour came to us to lighten the burden of our days, in the shape of speeches and addresses by governors; for our governors, though stronger than ever, are no longer silent. Having hushed other voices, they feel it their duty to shout loud and frequently and give us their views on life and its many problems. These solo performances became particularly amusing when economics and modern social problems were touched upon, and a measure of sympathy went out to the performers at this addition to their many burdens, for which they had received no training. Perhaps the sympathy was wasted, for in their own opinion the performances may have been adequate.

Still I shall venture to make a suggestion. Sir Malcolm Hailey is considered, with justification, to be a successful performer on the platform, and perhaps there is no other among the tribe of governors. Sir Malcolm is already considered almost too big and too wise a person for a governorship. Why not make him a kind of super-governor for the training of selected candidates for

governorship? These aspirants might go through a brief course and learn how to deliver a vice-chancellor's address with occasionl classical references and many pious platitudes, and a special dissertation on the danger of students or teachers dabbling in politics (all pro-government activities of course not being considered politics); how to answer an address from a municipal board and criticise its finances, with a special dissertation on the undesirability of municipalities mixing civics with politics (this has of course nothing to do with municipal teachers and other employees joining Aman Sabhas and similar organisations, and publicly working against such illegal or undesirable organisations as the Congress. Such public work should be commended); how to praise the police for their loyalty, efficiency, self-sacrifice, patriotism, gentleness, non-violence, amiability, sweet reasonableness, and purity of conduct, and tell them how they are above politics and their sole duty is to preserve law and order so that the nation may live peacefully and contentedly under the shadow of their protection; how to address Legislative Councils and praise the members for the high statesmanship they have shown in supporting government and the real moral courage they have exhibited in holding on to their seats in spite of popular disapproval, and further to tell them that the British Government stands for and has always stood for democracy as against dictatorship (it being made clear that the Viceroy's and governors' vast powers and ordinances and the like, are not in the nature of dictatorship but are meant only to safeguard special responsibilities); how to attend princes' banquets and reply to toasts praising the progressive regime of the prince, who, in the course of a brief decade, has succeeded in

establishing one secondary school, two primary schools, two dispensaries, a zoo with a monkey house, three game preserves, ten large motor garages, five stables for polo ponies, kennels for a large number of dogs, and a jazz band, and has built six new palaces to give employment to labour; and that, in further consideration for his peoples' welfare, keeps away in Europe for most of the time;—in the reply to the prince it should be pointed out that autocracy is obviously suited to the genius of Inlia; how to address an association of business men and merchants and point out to them that politics must not be mixed up with business and trade and true success and prosperity lie in the business man sticking to his own job and co-operating with the Government and the city of London so that India's credit may stand high; how to address zamindars and taluqadars and, agreeing with them that they are the salt of the Indian earth, encourage them in every way to organise themselves and take part in politics, so that the semi-feudal zamindari system, which is ideal for India, might continue and vested interests may be protected, and the constitution have stability;—and so on. This list has become long enough and must be ended. But it will show that the subjects are endless and each one has to be dealt with separately from its own angle.

I have referred to governors' speeches bringing a touch of humour to our prison lives. But sometimes they were not humorous or amusing, as when Sir Malcolm Hailey referred at Muttra to the Congress "hiring young girls and old women to go to gaol as political martyrs."

To go back to our little window—*The Statesman* A source of delightful romance that seldom failed was its Simla correspondent. In measured language, which gave

us a glimpse of the powerful mind working behind it, the Indian political scene was surveyed and the inner workings of Gandhiji's and the Congress mind were laid bare before us. We were told what they were thinking and what they were going to do to extricate themselves from the morass in which they had got stuck. Subsequently, when Mr. Gandhi or the Congress were foolish enough not to act in the manner forecasted, it was pointed out with evident truth how inconsistent they were. They had evidently changed their minds at the last moment and thus played a rather low trick on the Simla correspondent. It had been obvious enough before that a few wild men of the Congress were dragging Mr. Gandhi along, although all he wanted was peace and quiet and an opportunity to do solid constructive work. And then, almost as if to spite the correspondent, Mr. Gandhi changed places with the wild men and became as wild and aggressive as ever, dragging the peaceful Congress along with him. This was obviously not a sporting thing to do; it was not cricket.

But the true charm of the Simla correspondent lies in his inimitable style, which tells us something and yet does not tell it, which hints and suggests and indicates and insinuates and alludes and yet gracefully avoids definite statement, which says something (and yet does not say it) in a score of sentences which an unlearned and unsophisticated person would say rather bluntly in one short sentence. Perhaps the credit for this coy and coquettish style does not wholly belong to the correspondent, and it should rightly go to Gorton Castle where sit the mighty men weaving the web of India's destiny.

Sometimes the Simla correspondent excels even his

own high standard. What could be more delightful than the brave comparison of the air-bombing of the frontier villages with the far worse tale of death and disaster by motor accidents in England's green and pleasant land! Or the silencing of ignorant and vulgar critics by the demonstration that no real damage is done by these air raids; the inhabitants simply walk out of their huts or houses with their wives, goods and chattels, as soon as they receive warning, the empty huts are destroyed, and back come the residents to build their huts anew and perhaps after a better fashion, and life goes on again with scarce a ripple on its placid surface. There is little ill-feeling in the matter and no doubt, with the resumption of normal relations the Khan of Kotkai will lead a deputation to the British authorities or the R. A. F. to convey their thanks for the opportunity given them to rebuild their little towns on more modern principles of town-planning. Or perhaps the Khan will request that new organization with a fine resounding name, dear to the heart of *The Statesman*, the "Central Muslim Federation of Delhi," to undertake this pleasant task, provided the Khan can locate the Federation. But, no doubt, the Delhi office of *The Statesman* will help in the search; and later we shall read all about the deputation in the principal page of the newspaper, and the editor will write a learned and philosophical article on the hidden virtues of air-bombing.

The Simla correspondent occupies a class by himself; he defies comparison. But perhaps one may venture to place, not far below him, some of the Indian contributors to *The Statesman*. Long research and patient study have made them grasp the full significance of the Battle of Plassey. They possess a deep and profound knowledge of

all its implications and consequences, and this learning helps them greatly to understand the course of current events. It would perhaps not be correct to say that they have paid no attention to happenings subsequent to Plassey. Occasional flashes, lighting up the interior of their minds, have disclosed that they are also fully aware of the fact that early in the nineteenth century India took to English education and her chosen sons plunged into the wells of English political thought. Indeed they could hardly ignore this alliance as they themselves are the choice fruits of this early marriage. It is also obvious that they have heard of the fact that some time in the eighteen-seventies Queen Victoria became Empress of India.

It is by no means clear whether these learned Indian contributors of *The Statesman* have paid any heed to recent events such as those that have occurred during the last half century or so. Perhaps they feel, lost in the full contemplation of Plassey, that a mere fifty years of recent history can have little fundamental importance. It may be that they are right and we of a later day, without such deep roots in the past, and ignorant of the far-reaching significance of the Battle of Plassey are apt to attach too much importance to recent events.

Truth, it is said, lives at the bottom of a well. But what is a well to the eagle eyes of a *Statesman* correspondent! One such correspondent told us once the "Truth about the Andamans," those far off islands with an unsavoury reputation. Reading his account our fears vanished and we began almost to envy those fortunate persons who were made to live in these delectable islands. We were told that the Andamans were an ideal health resort for the convicts. The Punjabis thrive there, and, as

for the Bengalis, "the settlement is climatically a 'home from home.'" "One may wonder," continued the correspondent "why anarchist activities should be considered to qualify a man for all these advantages offered him by detention in the Andamans." Indeed, one may well wonder that even in this paradise some people are mad and foolish enough to starve themselves to death!

And perhaps it is fitting that with this exclamation of wonder and amazement we should close this window that gave us so many glimpses in prison of the wonderful world outside.

PRISON-LAND

A writer in a recent issue of an English periodical stated that the stress and strain of politics and prison life had broken me up. I do not know what his sources of information were, but I can say from a fairly intimate knowledge of my body and mind, that both of them are tough and sound and not in any danger of a break-up or collapse in the near future. Fortunately for myself, I have always attached importance to bodily health and physical fitness, and though I have often enough ill-treated my body, I have seldom permitted it to fall ill. Mental health is a more invisible commodity but I have taken sufficient care of that also and I am vain enough to imagine that I possess more of it than many a person who has not had to suffer the strain of active Congress politics and passive gaol life.

But my health or ill-health is a small matter which need not worry any one, although friends and newspapers have given it undue prominence. What is far more important, from the national and social point of view, is the state of the prisons and the bodily and mental conditions of the vast population that they house in India. It is a notorious fact that strong and brave men have suffered greatly and even collapsed bodily under the terrible strain of prolonged gaol life and detention. I have seen my nearest and dearest suffer in prison and the list of my personal friends who have done so is a long and painful one. Only recently a dear

and valued colleague, a friend whom I first met in Cambridge more than a quarter of a century ago, and who was among the bravest of the brave in this unhappy country of ours, J. M. Sen-Gupta, met his death while under detention.

It is natural that we should feel the sufferings of our colleagues, and those whom we have known, more than the misery of the thousands who are unknown to us. And yet it is not about them that I am writing these few lines. We, who have willingly sought to pass the forbidding iron gates of prison have no wish to squeal or to complain of the treatment given. If any of our countrymen are interested and wish to raise the question, it is for them to do so. Such questions are frequently raised, but as a rule they relate to well-known individuals, and special treatment for them is sought on the ground of their social position. To meet the clamour, a small handful are given what it called "A" and "B" class treatment; the great majority, probably over 95 per cent., face the full rigours of gaol life.

This differentiation into various classes has often been criticised and rightly criticised. To a slight extent it might be justified on medical grounds for it is highly probable that some people, used to a different diet, may develop the most violent disorders, as indeed many do, if they have to subsist on gaol diet. It is also obvious that some persons are physically incapable of the extreme forms of manual labour. But, apart from this, it is a little difficult to imagine the justification for depriving "C" class prisoners of the so-called privileges given to others. A higher class is supposed to be given because of higher 'social status' or a higher standard of life. One of the tests laid down, I believe, is the amount of land revenue a person pays. Does

it follow from a higher revenue that the person is more attached to his family and is therefore entitled to more interviews or letters? Or that greater facilities should be given for reading and writing? Those who pay large sums as land revenue are not usually noted for their intellectual attainments.

I do not, of course, mean to imply that those who get special facilities for interviews or letters or reading and writing should be deprived of these. These so-called privileges are poor enough as they stand, and it is well to realise that in most other countries the worst and lowest type of prisoner gets far more 'privileges' of this kind than even the 'A' class prisoner in India. And yet these 'A' and 'B' class privileges are given to such an insignificant number that they might well be ignored in considering the Indian prison system. Fundamentally, 'A' and 'B' classes are meant as something to show off and soothe public opinion. Most people who do not know the real facts are misled by them.

Some of the 'A' class prisoners, as also especially some of the detenus or State prisoners, have often to undergo one experience which is peculiarly distressing. They are kept alone without a companion for many months at a time, and , as every doctor knows, this loneliness is very bad for the average person. Only those who have strictly trained and disciplined their minds and can turn inwards, can escape ill effects. It is true that the prisoner or detenu is given the advantage of a few minutes' conversation daily with a member of the prison staff, but this is an advantage which is not seized with cheering and acclamation. This policy of more or less solitary confinement is apparently quite deliberate on the part of the Government. I remember that about the time I was arrested in December 1931, Khan

Abdul Ghaffar Khan was also arrested in Peshawar or Charsadda. Four arrest were made at the same time: Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, his brother Dr. Khan Sahib, Dr. Khan Sahib's young son, and a colleague of theirs. They were all brought down by special train and distributed in four separate prisons in four different cities. It was easy enough to keep all of them, or father and son or brothers together. But this was deliberately avoided and each one was, I believe, kept alone and by himself without any companion. At any rate I know that Dr. Khan Sahib was so kept in Naini prison. For over a month I was also in Naini then but we were kept apart and not allowed to meet. It was tantalizing for me, for Dr. Khan Sahib was a dear friend of my student days in England and I had not met him for many years.

It is not a question of favoured treatment for political prisoners. I know perfectly well that the treatment of politicals will grow progressively worse, as it has done in the course of the last dozen years. The only possible check is that of public opinion, but even that does not count in the last resort unless it is so strong as to ensure victory.

Thus it is obvious that political prisoners must expect progressively bad treatment. In 1930-31 the treatment was worse than in 1921-22, in 1932 it was worse than in 1930-31. To-day an ordinary political prisoner is certainly worse off in gaol than a non-political convict. Every effort is often made to harass him into apologising or at least to make him thoroughly frightened of prison.

It has been stated on behalf of Sir Samuel Hoare in the House of Commons that "over 500 persons in India were whipped during 1932 for offences in connection with the

civil disobedience movement." The existence or otherwise of whipping is often considered a test of the degree of civilization in a State. Many advanced States have done away with it altogether and even where it has been retained, it has been kept for, what are considered, the most degrading and brutal crimes, such as violent rape on immature girls. Some months ago, I believe, there was a discussion in the Assembly on the question of retaining the punishment of whipping for certain (non-political) crimes. It was pointed out by Government spokesmen that this was necessary for some brutal crimes. Probably every psychologist and psychiatrist is of a contrary opinion and holds that a brutal punishment is the most foolish of methods for dealing with brutal crimes. But, however that may be, in India we see that it is quite a common occurrence now for flogging to be administered for purely political and technical offences, admittedly involving no moral turpitude, or for petty offences against prison discipline.

Yet another advance has been recorded in the treatment of women political prisoners. Many hundreds of women were sentenced and an extraordinarily small number of them were put in 'A' or 'B' classes. As it happens, the lot of women in prison—political or non-political—is far worse than that of men. Men do move about within the gaol in going to and fro in connection with their work; they have change and movement and this is helpful in refreshing their minds to some extent. Women, though given lighter work, are closely confined in a small place and lead a terribly monotonous existence. Women convicts are also as a rule far worse as companions than the average male convicts. Among men there is a large proportion of thoroughly non-criminal types, decent village

folk who had a brawl over a land dispute and managed to get long sentences as a result. The criminal element is proportionately much higher among the women. The great majority of women political prisoners, most of them bright young girls, had to endure this suffocating atmosphere. It seems to me that hardly anything that has taken place in our prisons or outside is quite so bad as the treatment of our women folk.

I would not have any women, whether she belongs to the middle classes or the peasantry or the working classes, subjected to the treatment that has been accorded to them in our prisons. As it happens, the great majority of women political prisoners have been from the bourgeois or middle classes. The peasant may go to prison for a political purpose but his wife goes very seldom. Considered from the standpoint of Government, the social standards of the women politicals were relatively high. Wives of vakils, bank managers and the like were placed in 'C' class. Ladies who had been my honoured hostesses and in whose houses I had stopped, were sent to the 'C' class.

In the course of a speech in the U. P. Legislative Council last year, the then Home Member, made the flesh of members creep by suggesting that if conditions in gaols were improved for politicals, all the dacoits would forthwith come to gaol as political prisoners. I believe he advanced some similar argument against improving the condition of women prisoners. No doubt these arguments were up to the intellectual standards of the majority of his audience and they served their purpose. For those of us who live in the outer darkness, it is interesting to plumb the depths of knowledge and understanding which the

Home Member's statement revealed—understanding of the nature of dacoits and the like, knowledge of criminology, psychology and human nature. The arguments lead us to certain conclusions which perhaps did not occur to the Home Member. If a dacoit is prepared to leave his profession and go to gaol, if gaol is not too harsh, it follows that he will be much more prepared to quit dacoity and crime if a minimum of security and life's necessaries come to him outside gaol. That is, the urge to dacoity is the economic urge of hunger and distress; remove this urge and dacoity goes. The cure for dacoity and crime is thus not heavy punishment but removal of the basic cause. But I have no desire to make last year's Home Member responsible for such far-reaching and revolutionary notions, although they may logically follow from what he said. From another and a higher office he has been letting us have occasional glimpses of his deep knowledge of the laws of economics and no doubt he would repudiate such heresy.

Reference is often made to political prisoners and Government has refused to classify them separately. I think, under the circumstances, Government has been right. For who are the politicals? It is easy enough to separate the civil disobedience prisoners, but there are many other ways of catching an inconvenient political agitator than under the so-called political sections of various laws and ordinances. It is a common occurrence in rural areas for peasant leaders and workers to be run in under the preventive sections of the Criminal Procedure Code or even for more serious offences. Such persons are as much political prisoners as any others and there are large numbers of them. This procedure is not usual in

the larger towns because of the publicity involved.

High walls and iron gates cut off the little world of prison from the wide world outside. Here in this prison world every thing is different; there are no colours, no changes, no movement, no hope, no joy for the long term prisoner, the 'lifer'. Life runs its dull round with a terrible monotony; it is all flat desert land with no high points and no oases to quench one's thirst or shelter one from the burning heat. Days run into weeks, and weeks into months and years till the sands of life run out.

All the might of the State is against him and none of the ordinary checks are available. Even the voice of pain is hushed, the cry of agony cannot be heard beyond the high walls. In theory there are some checks and visitors and officials from outside go to inspect. But it is rare for a prisoner to dare to complain to them, and those who dare have to suffer for their daring. The visitor goes, the petty gaol officials remain, and it is with them that he has to pass his days. It is not surprising that he prefers to put up with his troubles rather than risk an addition to them.

The coming of political prisoners in large numbers threw some light into the dark corners of prison-land. A breath of fresh air came in bringing with it some hope to the long-term prisoner. Public opinion was stirred a little and some improvements followed. But they were few and essentially the system remains as it was. Sometimes one hears of 'riots' in gaols. What exactly does this signify? Perhaps the prisoners were to blame. And yet it is a mad thing to do for unarmed, helpless prisoners, surrounded by high walls, to challenge the armed might of the gaol staff. There can only be one outcome of it,

and inevitably one is led to think that only extreme provocation could induce the prisoners to this act of folly and despair.

There are enquiries, either departmental or perhaps by the District Magistrate. What chance has the prisoner? On the one side a fully prepared case supported by the staff and the numerous prisoners who must do their bidding; on the other, a frightened shivering outcaste of humanity, manacled and fettered, who has no one's sympathy and whom no one believes. The Judicial Secretary to the U. P. Government stated in the local Council last November that those who had been confined in gaol, being interested parties, must be considered as unreliable. So the poor prisoner being very much an interested party when he is himself beaten or ill-treated cannot obviously be believed. It would be interesting to find out from the U. P. Government what evidence, short of the testimony of the invisible and supernatural powers, a prisoner could produce under the circumstances.

But for the tragedy behind them one might appreciate the humour of private governmental enquiries. Sir Samuel Hoare grows righteously indignant whenever any charge is made against the police or the gaol staffs and is consistent in refusing all public or impartial enquiries. I seem to recollect that there was a departmental enquiry in the Hijli affair about two years ago, and shortly afterwards an official enquiry held that the official version of the occurrences had been entirely wrong. But then that was an unusual affair. Most departmental enquiries are not checked in this way. One feels like having recourse to the delightful plays of Sir William Gilbert for an analogy, or perhaps that classic of English childhood, the

immortal Alice, is even more suitable:

Fury said to a mouse,
That he found in the house,
Let us both go to law:
I will prosecute you.
We must have the trial;
For really this morning
I've nothing to do!
Said the mouse to the cur,
'Such a trial, dear sir,
With no jury or judge,
Would be wasting your breath.'
I'll be judge, I'll be jury,
Said cunning old Fury;
I'll try the whole cause
And condemn you to death.'

I had a personal experience last year which has a certain wider significance. The jailor of the Allahabad District Jail insulted and hustled out my mother and wife when they were having an interview with my brother-in-law. I was angry when I heard this. And yet I did not attach much importance to the incident for all it signified was that an ill-trained and ill-mannered official had misbehaved. I expected some expression of regret from some higher official. Instead, punishments were awarded by Government to my mother, wife and brother-in-law, of course without the slightest reference to them. Indirectly I was punished by not being allowed to see my mother or wife for a period. An enquiry from me to the Inspector-General brought a brief reply containing an unmannerly reference to my mother. It was only at this stage that Government found out the true facts

from me and from statements made by my mother and wife.

It was obvious that they had erred egregiously. In spite of my asking them repeatedly they have not pointed out any error in our statements and I must therefore take it that they accept those versions as indeed they must. If so, they had acted very foolishly in the first instance and the least they could do was to express regret. I am still waiting for that straightforward expression of regret.

If such treatment can be accorded to my mother and wife and can be followed by the strange behaviour and obstinacy of Government, it can well be imagined what the average less-known prisoner and his people have to put up with. Our whole system of Government, superimposed as it is from above and without any roots in the people, can only hang together so long as one peg supports the other. That is its strength, and that, fortunately, is its weakness, for where the collapse of such a system comes, it is complete.

Last year I ventured to write to the Home Member from prison and I told him that after twelve years of a fairly extended experience of prison conditions in the U. P., I had come very regretfully to the conclusion that the gaols in the province were steeped in corruption and violence and falsehood. Many years ago I pointed out some of the abuses to a Superintendent of my prison (he became Inspector-General afterwards). He admitted them and said that when he first joined the Prison Department he was full of enthusiasm for reform. Later he found that little could be done, so he allowed things to take their course.

Indeed little can be done by the best of individuals—and many of those in charge can hardly be considered shining examples. An Indian prison is after all a replica of the larger India. What counts is the objective—is it human welfare or just the working of a machine or the preservation of vested interests? Why are punishments given—as society's government's revenge or with the object of reforming?

Do judges or prison officers ever think that the unhappy wretch before them should be made into a person capable of filling his place in society when he comes out of prison? It almost seems an impertinence to raise these questions for how many people really care?

Our Judges are, let us hope, large-hearted; they are certainly long-sentencing. Here is an "Associated Press" message from Peshawar dated December 15, 1932: "For writing threatening letters to the Inspector-General of Police and other high officials of the Frontier soon after the Coldstream murder, accused named Jamnadas has been sentenced by the City Magistrate of Peshawar to eight years' imprisonment under Section 500-507 I. P. C." Jamnadas was apparently a young boy.

Here is another remarkable instance—also an A. P. message, dated April 22, 1933 from Lahore: "For being in possession of a knife with a blade seven inches long, a young Muslim named Saadat was sentenced by the City Magistrate under Section 19 of the Arms Act to 18 months' rigorous imprisonment."

And a third instance from Madras, dated July 6, 1933. A boy named Ramaswami threw a harmless cracker in the court of the Chief Presidency Magistrate as he was engaged in a conspiracy case hearing. Ramaswami was

sentenced to four years, apparently in a Juvenile Prison.

These are three not unusual instances. They could easily be multiplied and there are worse cases. I suppose people are long suffering in India and past all astonishment at such amazing sentences. Personally I find that no amount of practice can prevent my gasping when I read of them. Anywhere else, except in Nazi Germany, such sentences would create a tremendous outcry.

And justice is not entirely blind in India; it keeps one eye open. In every agrarian brawl or riot large numbers of peasants get life sentences. Usually these petty riots take place when an exasperated tenantry are goaded beyond endurance by the agents of the landlords. A simple process of identifying all those who are supposed to have been present on the scene is enough to condemn them for life or to long terms of imprisonment. Hardly any attention is paid to the provocation and even the identification is usually of the feeblest kind. It is easy to drag in any individual who is in the bad books of the police. If the affair can be given a political tinge or connected with a no-rent campaign a conviction is all the easier and the sentences the heavier.

In a recent case a peasant who slapped a tax-collector was awarded a year's imprisonment. Another instance is somewhat different. It took place last July in Meerut. A Naib-Tahsildar went to realise irrigation dues from the residents of a village. One peasant was carried by the peons to where the Naib was seated and the peons complained that this man's wife and son had beaten them. A somewhat remarkable story. However the Naib ordered that the peasant should be vicariously punished for his wife's offence and the three of them, the Naib and the two peons,

beat the unhappy man with sticks. As a result of the beating the man died later. The Naib and the peons were subsequently tried and convicted for simple hurt but they were forthwith released on probation of good conduct for six months. The good conduct I suppose signified that they must not beat another man to death within the next six months. The comparison of these cases is instructive.

So the question of prison reform leads us inevitably to a reform of our criminal procedure and, even more so, a reform in the mentalities of our judges who still think in terms of a hundred years ago and are blissfully ignorant of modern ideas of punishment and reform. That of course leads, as everything else does, to a change of the whole system of government.

But to confine ourselves to the prisons. Any reform must be based on the idea that a prisoner is not punished but reformed and made into a good citizen. (I am of course not considering politicals. Most of them are so much steeped in error that they may be considered past reform). If this objective is once accepted, it would result in a complete overhauling of the prison system. At present few prison officials have even heard of such a notion. I have a recollection that the old U. P. Jail Manual had a paragraph pointing out that the prisoner's work was not meant to be productive or useful; its object was punitive. This was almost an ideal statement of what a prison should not be. That paragraph has since gone but the spirit still remains—a spirit that is harsh and punitive and utterly lacking in humanity. The list of prison offences in the U. P. Jail Manual is an amazing one. It contains all that the wit of man can devise to make life as intolerable as possible. Talking, singing, loud laughing, visiting latrines

at other than stated hours, not eating the food given, etc., etc., are among the offences. It is not surprising that all the energy of the gaol staff goes in suppressing the prisoner and preventing him from doing the hundred and one things forbidden him.

Ignorant people imagine that if the punishment is not severe enough crimes will increase. As a matter of fact, the exact reverse is the truth. A century ago in England, petty thieves were hung. When it was proposed to abolish the death penalty for thieves, there was a tremendous outcry and noble lords stated in the House of Lords that this would result in thieves and robbers seizing everything and creating a reign of terror. As a matter of fact the reform had the opposite effect and crime went down. Crime has steadily gone down in England and other countries as the criminal law and prisons have been bettered. Many old prisons in England are not required as prisons now and are used for other purposes. In India, it is well-known that the prison population goes on increasing (quite apart from political prisoners) and the executive and judiciary help in this process by encouraging long and barbarous sentences. The imprisonment of the young is universally considered to be a most demoralising system and is avoided. Here in India gaols are full of young men and boys and frequently they are sentenced to whipping.

Another error which people indulge in is the fear that if gaol conditions are improved people will flock in! This shows a singular ignorance of human nature. No one wants to go to prison however good the prison might be. To be deprived of liberty and family life and friends and home surroundings is a terrible thing. It is well-known that the Indian peasant will prefer to stick to his ancestral

soil and starve rather than go elsewhere to better his condition. To improve prison conditions does not mean that prison life should be made soft; it means that it should be made human and sensible. There should be hard work, but not the barbarous and wasteful labour of the oil pumps or water pumps or mills. The prison should produce goods either in large-scale modern factories where prisoners work, or in cottage industries. All work should be useful from the point of view of the prison as well as the future of the prisoner, and the work should be paid for at market rates, minus the cost of maintenance of the prisoner. After a hard eight-hour day's work the prisoners should be encouraged to co-operate together in various activities—games, sports, reading, recitals, lectures. They should above all be encouraged to laugh and develop human contacts with the prison staff and other prisoners. Every prisoner's education must be attended to, not only in just the three R's, but something more, wherever possible. The mind of the prisoner should be cultivated and the prison library, to which there must be free access, should have plenty of good books. Reading and writing should be encouraged in every way and that means that every prisoner should be allowed to have writing materials and books. Nothing is more harmful to the prisoner than to spend 12 to 14 hours at a stretch every evening locked up in the cell or barrack with absolutely nothing to do. A Sunday or holiday means for him a much longer period of locking up.

Selected newspapers are essential to keep the prisoner in touch with the world, and interviews and letters should be made as frequent and informal as possible. Personally, I think that weekly interviews and letters should be per-

mitted. The prisoner should be made to feel as far as possible that he or she is a human being and brutal and degrading punishments must be avoided.

All this sounds fantastic when compared with present-day prison conditions in India. And yet I have only suggested what the prisons of most of the advanced countries already have. Indeed they have much more. Our present administration, and indeed our Government itself, cannot understand or appreciate this as they have successfully imprisoned their own minds in prisons of dull routine. But public opinion must begin to demand these changes so that, when the time comes, they might be introduced without difficulty.

It must not be thought that these changes will involve much extra expenditure. If properly run on modern industrial lines the prisons can not only be self-supporting but can actually make a profit after providing for all the additional amenities suggested. There is absolutely no difficulty in introducing the changes except one—the absolute necessity of having a competent, human staff fully understanding and appreciating the new angle of vision and eager to work it.

I wish some of our people would study and, where possible, personally inspect, prison conditions in foreign countries. They will find how our prisons lag far behind them. The new human element is imposing itself everywhere, as also a recognition of the fact that a criminal is largely created by social conditions and, instead of being punished, has to be treated as for a disease. Real criminals are infantile in mind and it is folly to treat them as grown-ups. A delightful book which stressed this point humorously long ago is Samuel Butler's "Erewhon."

In the prisons of the little country of Latvia even, we are told that "everything is done to create a homely atmosphere in the rooms and cells with plants, flowers, books and such personal belongings of the prisoners as photographs, handicrafts, and wireless sets." Prisoners are paid for their work, half the earnings accumulating and the other half being spent by prisoners on extra food, tobacco, newspapers, etc.

Russia, that terrible land of the Soviets, has perhaps gone farthest ahead in the improvement of prison conditions. Recently a competent observer inspected the Soviet prisons and his report is interesting. This observer was an eminent English lawyer, D. N. Pritt, K. C. who is also the Chairman of the Howard League for Penal Reform—an organization which has been the pioneer of prison reform in England for more than sixty years. Pritt tells us that the punitive character of punishment has been entirely removed and it is considered purely reformatory now. The treatment of prisoners is humane and remarkably good.

There are two types of prisons: (1) Semi-open camps or fully open communes or colonies. These are really not prisons at all; prisoners live a village life subject to certain restrictions. (2) Closed prisons. These are the hardest type of prisons and yet even here there is a surprising amount of freedom for the prisoners. There is a feeling of equality between warders and prisoners and unrestricted intercourse, except in working hours, with other prisoners or with guards. There is normal factory work for eight hours a day at normal wages. For the rest there are games, education, gymnastics, lectures, wireless, books, and amateur dramatic performances by the

prisoners. The prisoners also produce a wall newspaper and do not hesitate to criticize warders and other prison officials in it "for having forgotten that a prison is not for punishment, but for reformation."

The principle of self-government, which is encouraged in all institutions in Russia, is even practised to some extent in the prisons, the prisoners imposing penalties on themselves. Smoking is allowed except when at work. Frequent interviews are permitted and a virtually unrestricted and uncensored writing and reception of letters. And, most remarkable rule of all, almost always the prisoner is allowed a fortnight's summer holiday to go home to look after the harvest, etc. In the case of a woman prisoner who has a baby, she can either keep the baby in the prison creche, where the baby will be properly looked after or leave the baby at home. In the latter event the mother is allowed to go home several times a day to feed it!

There were flowers, pictures and photographs in the cells. Prisoners were regularly examined by psychiatrists to find out if their mental condition was satisfactory. Whenever necessary, prisoners were removed to mental hospitals for treatment. Solitary confinement was very rare.

Hardly credible. And yet there it is and the results of this humane treatment have been surprisingly good. The Russians hope to reduce crime substantially and to shut up most of their prisons. So the good treatment does not eventually fill up the gaols but empties them, provided the economic background is suitable and work is to be had.

A short while ago there was a meeting in the House of Commons to consider the protection of animals in India.

A very laudable object. But it is worth remembering that the two-legged animal, *homo sapiens*, in India is also worthy of care and protection— especially those who undergo the long physical and mental torture of prison life and come out impaired of the capacity for normal life.

Every prison cell in Norway has an inscription on its walls. It is a quotation from a speech of a famous Norwegian prisoner, Lars Olsen Skrefsund, who served a long sentence for theft when drunk, came out to India afterwards and founded the Scandinavian Santal Mission. He became a great linguist knowing seventeen languages, ancient and modern, and among them of course was the Santal language. The passage in his speech which is exhibited in the prison cells runs as follows:

"Nobody can imagine what a prisoner feels but one who has at some time felt what it is to be a prisoner. Some idea of it may be formed, but this cannot express the feelings of the man who sits, sad and forsaken in his cell."

It is well that those whom fate or fortune keep out of the prison cell give thought sometimes to that sad and forsaken figure.

THE ANDAMAN PRISONERS

(This statement was issued to the press on Sept. 13, 1933)

Sir Harry Haig has done me the honour of referring to me in that august and ponderour assembly, the Council of State. He has mentioned the fact that one of my first public acts after my release from prison was to add my name to the manifesto about the condition of prisoners in the Andaman Islands. Evidently, he expected that a long stay in prisons in India must have dulled my feelings of humanity and my sensibility to human suffering.

I am glad to assure him that I have managed to retain these feelings and sentiments inspite of the course of treatment that the Government in India has prescribed for me from time to time. Indeed, the manifesto expressed very feebly what I felt in the matter.

Personally, I was not very desirous of making any demands on the Government however obvious and humanitarian they might be, through this manifesto, for, long experience has taught me that humanity or reason has little place in the mental equipment of some of the high officials of the Government.

Indeed, I had pointed this out in my letter which apparently was not published, to the originators of the manifesto. Apart from other considerations, I am perfectly happy to have my name included in the "list of miscellaneous signatures", which contains the honoured names of Dr. Rabindranath Tagore and Acharya P. C. Ray.

I am an admirer of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, but I have not taken my ideas of crime and punishment from them. Sir Harry Haig, no doubt, has taken his ideas from the Mikado, that monarch whose "object all sublime" was to "make the punishment fit the crime", and is practising these Gilbertian theories on the unhappy prisoners in Indian prisons and especially in prisons in the Andamans. He will excuse us. I trust, if we are unable to appreciate this royal example and still cling to humanitarian notions and to the belief that all human beings should be treated as human beings and that all imprisonment should be reformatory and not punitive, vindictive and barbarous.

M. N. ROY

I met him first in Moscow in November 1927. I had heard a great deal about him and had read his brilliant book on the Indian problem and so I looked forward with interest to this meeting, and I was not disappointed.

Six feet tall and well built physically, M. N. Roy was a fine specimen of Indian humanity. Intellectually, he was alert and keen and even a few minutes conversation impressed me with his unusual ability. He was obviously a man of intellect, and yet he was something more. He was a man of action also, trying always to fit his action to his thought and ever eager to seize any opportunity that might offer itself. Firmly convinced of the Marxist view of economics and politics and life, he was devoted to the great cause as he conceived it. But he had the pride of intellect also and he was not of the sort that follows another blindly and without questioning.

I was impressed by him. Evidently he was not impressed by me and during the years that followed he wrote many an article in bitter criticism of me and my kind, whom he dubbed, with considerable truth, as petty bourgeois. He used hard words which stung, but the memory of our brief meeting remained fresh in my mind and I retained a partiality and a soft corner in my heart for him.

Years passed. One day in 1931 I was surpised to find that a stranger who had called on me was none other than M. N. Roy. I had not expected him, I did not even know that he was in India, but I recognised him immediately and was delighted to meet him.

He had come back to his homeland, after a long absence of about fifteen years, under strange circumstances. He was one of those who were bitterly disliked by the British authorities and a return to the lands where the Union Jack was supreme meant, almost certainly, prison and suffering. He knew this full well and yet he came. He had disagreed on some grounds of policy and tactics with the predominant Stalin group in the Soviet Union and any pronounced disagreement was not welcomed there. So he left Russia.

But he was not the man to remain idle. The cause called him and the call was too powerful to be ignored. All the pent up energy of the man of intellect and action pushed him inevitably to his homeland though he knew the fate that awaited him there.

That fate met him some months after his return. None of us could do much for him and yet I wanted to be of some service to him, to show somehow in what regard I held him. I joined his defence committee because of this desire of mine though I knew that such committees are of little real use in India at present and I had little faith in them.

To-day he lies in the Bareilly Central Prison and for nearly two years and a half he has been in gaol. He is ill and is said to suffer from a serious constitutional disease. For long unused to a hot climate, he has had to endure the terrible summer heat of Northern India in the hard and painful surroundings of a prison. The usual facilities which were granted to some of us in prison are denied him and, it appears, that even books and writing materials are severely restricted. For an intellectual that is the hardest trial of all.

And so he wastes away and his bright young life, which had already shown such rich promise, slides downhill to the brink. Such is the fate of one of the bravest and ablest of India's sons of the present generation. We are poor enough in human material and it is a tragedy to see the waste of the lives of those who have the ability and capacity to do so much for their country, while others whom nobody can accuse of possessing any intellect or ideals or even decent feelings occupy the seats of power and authority. But it is wrong to think that their lives are wasted. They serve the cause better in this silent way than many who shout from the housetops.

THE INDIAN STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

An article sent to the "Daily Herald" of London in October 1933 and subsequently published by it.

It is not easy to write briefly on the Indian situation for the information of the British public. Partisan and one-sided propaganda has held the field there for so long that every vital issue has been confused and a totally false impression created of conditions in India. Even in India, during the last three or four years, Ordinance rule, which is close cousin to martial law under certain legal forms, and a rigid censorship of the press have suppressed not only expressions of opinion but even news that was unpalatable to British authorities in India. The newspaper press is bound hand and foot, public meetings on political issues are not allowed to be held, books and pamphlets, even those giving admitted facts, are proscribed, letters and telegrams are censored and sometimes do not reach their destination. It is an offence in many parts of the country to publish the names or photographs of people arrested under the Ordinances. Some months back even a memorial meeting on the anniversary of the death of Pandit Motilal Nehru was banned, though it was convened largely by non-Congressmen and a peaceful moderate like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was to have presided over it. In some parts of Bengal and in the Frontier Province there is a military occupation. Even children in Chittagong and Midnapore have to carry about cards of identity. The movements of people are strictly regulated, even their

dress has often to conform to official directions and heavy fines are imposed on whole towns and villages to which the residents are made to contribute, regardless of guilt or innocence.

British newspapers attack the Indian National movement from a variety of fronts, regardless of the obvious inconsistency of their statements. On the one hand, the Congress is said to be a reactionary body controlled by mill-owners and the like; on the other, no-rent campaigns are said to be the work of Bolsheviks and their kind, rousing up the peaceful peasantry by their artful agitation. Even well-informed newspapers give currency to statements which are entirely wrong and have no relation to facts. Some time ago, one of the best of the English weeklies stated as a fact that the movement against untouchability and for the raising of the depressed classes was started by Mr. Gandhi's fast last year and that the Congress had closed its doors to these classes. As a matter of fact, the movement is an old one and it has been one of the biggest movements in India since 1920 when the Congress, at Mr. Gandhi's instance, made it a major plank in its programme. The Congress has never kept out the depressed classes and during the last thirteen years it has insisted on representatives of the depressed classes being elected to its highest executive committees. Mr. Gandhi's fast undoubtedly gave the movement a tremendous push.

India and the East generally are supposed to be mysterious lands where strange peoples work in strange and peculiar ways and no real attempt is made to understand them. This magic view of history and geography may perhaps fit in with the somewhat romantic and unworldly, and yet profitable, outlook of the average Con-

servative or Liberal politician who has no other standards to go by. But Labour believes in a scientific and economic interpretation of history and current events and it is surprising that British Labour should suffer under the same delusion. Perhaps generations of imperialist domination have affected the ideology of British Labour and made it unable to take a correct and objective view where British imperialist interests are concerned. We are told by Labour leaders that nationalism is a narrow creed and, therefore, Indian nationalism is reactionary. Under cover of this doctrine they seek to perpetuate British Imperialism calling it by the highsounding title of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Nationalism is, of course, a reactionary force in the modern world, whether it functions in England or India, but it is an inevitable reaction to imperialism in colonial countries, and a step which cannot be avoided in the march to real internationalisim. To defend any kind of imperialism by calling colonial nationalism as reactionary is sheer hypocrisy.

It is a common place that great movements are not caused by individuals or a handful of agitators but are due, in the main, to economic forces. The Indian National movement arose in this way and in its early days was controlled by the upper middle class. It was not essentially hostile to imperialism, as this class itself was a product of British rule and wanted to fit itself into the fabric of imperialism. The march of economic events, however, wrought a change in it and the lower middle class and the *declassed* intellectuals began to dominate it. India played an important part in the great national wave that shook the whole of Asia after the Great War. A great national leader inspired the people and for the first time the masses, and

especially the peasantry, took an effective part in the national struggle. In the afterwar years the association of the masses with the Congress increased progressively and in some provinces the peasantry played an important role in formulating policy and in participating in direct action. The industrial workers, especially in Bombay, built up a trade union movement and developed a revolutionary ideology. As an organised group they did not co-operate with Congress but they were powerfully influenced by it and many took part in the Congress campaigns. At the same time Indian Labour carried on its own fight against capitalism by means of strikes.

As the Congress became more radical and dependent on mass support, the Indian vested interests that were represented in it, became frightened and some of them dropped out. It was out of these leavings that the small and ineffective Moderate or Liberal group was formed. Association with the masses forced economic issues to the front in the Congress and a socialist ideology began to develop. A number of vaguely socialist resolutions were passed from time to time and in 1931 the Congress took a more definite step in this direction by adopting an economic programme at Karachi.

The direct action struggle of the Congress during the last four years and the slump and rapid march of economic events in the world during this period have resulted in influencing the Congress powerfully in a socialist direction, and the struggle for independence has come more and more to mean a radical change in the social order to bring relief to the suffering masses. In a recent correspondence Mr. Gandhi declared that real independence must mean the de-vesting of the vested interests in India.

The Congress still continues to be a national organization and as such includes in its fold many groups and classes which have conflicting social interests. But recent events have forced the economic issue to the forefront and, as a result, the Congress has become even more a mass organization and the Indian vested interests, from the Princes downwards, have joined hands with British vested interests in India to resist all real political and social change. The Round Table Conference in London was such a grouping of vested interests. Thus inevitably our struggle for independence is also becoming a struggle for social freedom.

The word 'independence' is not a happy word, for it signifies isolation and there can be no such isolation or independence in the modern world. But the word has to be used for want of a better one. It must not be understood, however, to mean that we want to cut ourselves off from the rest of the world. We do not believe in a narrow and aggressive nationalism. We believe in inter-dependence and international co-operation, but at the same time we are convinced that there can be no dependence whatever and no real co-operation with imperialism. Thus we want complete independence from every kind of Imperialism. But that does not rule out the fullest co-operation with the British people or other peoples who do not wish to exploit us. With imperialism there can be and will be no compromise under whatever guise it may come.

Essentially, therefore, our struggle for freedom is a struggle for a radical change of the social structure and the ending of all exploitation of the masses. This can only be done by the de-vesting of the great vested interests in India. A mere process of changing officials, of 'Indianisation', as it is called, of giving a high office to an Indian

instead of an Englishman, has no interest whatever for us. It is the system which exploits the masses of India that we object to and which must go before any effective relief comes to the masses.

The Round Table Conferences in London have proceeded on an entirely different basis. Almost their sole concern has been to protect every conceivable vested interest and make it impregnable, and to this crowd of parasites they wish to add others. Thus the whole Round Table scheme instead of lessening the exploitation of the masses actually puts fresh burdens on them. We are told by the Secretary of State for India that the constitutional changes will involve extra-expenditure of many millions and, therefore, must wait till the world has got over its present economic discontents and India is more prosperous. He may have to wait a long time if he wishes these discontents to be solved according to his liking. His statement shows a singular lack of appreciation of what is happening in the world and what is likely to happen in the future. But even apart from that, it is an extraordinary instance of the powerful reasoning powers of Whitehall and the India Office. India is in a state of revolt because the working classes, the peasantry and the lower middle classes are crushed by various kinds of exploitation. They want immediate relief; they want bread for their hungry stomachs. Even the great majority of the landlords are being reduced to beggary as the land tenure system is breaking down. The remedy for this collapse and wide-spread misery is sought in propping up all the vested interests that have brought it about and in attempting to strengthen a semi-feudal order, which has long outlived its utility and is an obstacle to all progress. In addition to this, further

burdens are cast on the masses. And then we are told that when conditions right themselves of their own accord, it will be time enough to introduce changes.

It is manifest that this method of procedure is the sheerest quibbling with a great problem affecting vast numbers of human beings. The Round Table scheme, whether it is adopted by the British Parliament, as it is, or varied, will not solve a single problem in India. Much is made in England of the so-called 'die-hard' opposition to it, of the attacks of the Churchill-Lloyd group and of the defence bravely put up by Mr. Baldwin and others. So far as India is concerned, it views these mock battles with supreme unconcern, for, whatever the result of these may be, it will not affect her attitude to a scheme which is reactionary, absurd and unworkable to an extraordinary degree. The British Government may succeed in grouping together round itself all the backward, feudal, and reactionary groups in India, including even the bigoted religious obscurantists who have been frightened by Mr. Gandhi's attacks on their strongholds. If it finds pleasure in this varied company, we have no complaint. It makes our task easier in bringing about a social change with a real political change.

Thus so far as the Congress is concerned, the Round Table Conference and the Joint Select Committee have made no difference whatever to our struggle for freedom, except in so far as they have cleared issues and demonstrated that British imperialism stands for all that is reactionary in India. Under these circumstances the struggle for independence and social change must go on. Indeed, it is not in the power of any individual or group to end this struggle. Even the Congress cannot do it, for the struggle

for freedom is the natural result of economic conditions, and so long as these conditions continue they must find outlet in such a struggle. If the Congress leaders withdraw, other people and other organizations will take their place.

A political solution of the struggle can only come when the Indian people can settle their own constitution in a popularly elected Constituent Assembly. Such an Assembly would also, I have no doubt, solve minority and other problems, which have assumed so much prominence because their solution has been entrusted not to popularly chosen spokesmen but to official nominees. It is these reactionary nominees who have refused to agree among themselves and made it appear that the Indian people cannot agree. The Indian people have never been given a real chance to solve the problem for themselves. So far as the Congress is concerned, it has little difficulty, as it has long been prepared to guarantee minority rights.

The Congress does not want any power for itself. I am sure that it will willingly abide by the decision of the Constituent Assembly, and even dissolve itself as soon as Indian political independence is achieved. It is doubtful, however, if under existing conditions, or in the near future, such a Constituent Assembly can be held. The more this is delayed the more will the political problem of India become an economic one and the ultimate change will be social as well as political. The struggle for Indian freedom is essentially a part of the world struggle for the emancipation of the exploited everywhere and for the establishment of a new social order.

A LETTER TO ENGLAND

Extracts from a letter to a correspondent in England which appeared in the "Manchester Guardian" of December 15, 1933. The letter was in answer to a letter received from the correspondent and many of the references are to the questions that had been put.

I think you are right in saying that Mr. Gandhi has suppressed to some extent independent thought and initiative. Is that not inevitable when a great personality with a magnetic and extraordinary power of mass appeal arises? And yet, fundamentally, I think your statement is not wholly correct. There was very little independent political thought before what might be called the Gandhi era. Our middle-class politicians and intellectuals merely repeated some phrases which they had learnt from the nineteenth-century English liberal writers, regardless of their applicability to Indian conditions. Gandhi for the first time succeeded in pulling some of them out of these ruts and made them think along different lines, or, rather, act along different lines. This action and the course of events gradually forced a newer ideology—vague and confused, no doubt, but with some relation to facts.

But Gandhi's real contribution was not this change in the horizon of the intelligentsia or part of it, important as this was. It was the vast change he wrought in the mentality of the Indian masses. This was not just a Messiah-worship, as is often stated. There was certainly a great deal of the idea of a Messiah in the popular mind, and yet there was something far more. India has had

and has to-day no lack of people who are called "mahatmas" and reverenced, and even blindly obeyed by their followers. But the awakening that Gandhi brought about was definitely a political awakening of the masses. Gandhi was the political leader of India, not a religious one. Political subjects began to be discussed in the villages and the bazaars, quite divorced from religion and communalism. Thus, instead of suppressing political ideas, Gandhi actually did the reverse from a mass point of view. This sudden release from long-continued suppression, and the programme of open and defiant action that Gandhi put forward, worked an amazing change in the masses. A helpless and demoralised people looked up and gathered strength and confidence in themselves and began to hope.

It is true that the new thought and action all ran along one channel. That was bound to happen in a mass movement. Some intellectuals who opposed the new trend were swept aside by the current, but this was largely because they had proved themselves bankrupt in ideas, ineffective in action, and hopelessly out of touch with realities.

Gandhi thus released thought from its old bondage and did not suppress it. The mass movement however, tended to enforce conformity. Even this conformity did not and could not stop the growth of new ideas. What it did was to kill or smother the lifeless ideology of the Indian moderates. To some extent it is true that other ideas more in fitness with modern conditions were also partly smothered in the process, but they were bound to survive, and they have grown.

The conditions of the peasantry and the industrial workers are steadily deteriorating, and no real relief seems

possible under existing conditions. The zemindar system, which prevails in some of the provinces, is hard hit. [Under this system the native pays revenue for his holding direct to the Government of India.] The British Government is in a quandary. Politically it supports the zemindars in order to draw them to itself. Economically the zemindars are a nuisance to Government and are no longer required. The Government would like to increase its own revenue from land, and this can come only at the cost of the zemindar. The Government would also like to better the lot of the peasantry, partly in order to soothe them and prevent them from aggressive mass activity, and partly to increase their purchasing power so that they might consume foreign, and especially British, goods more. This would help British trade and also increase the Customs revenue of the Central Government and thus give it much-needed relief. The poor zemindar does not fit with the scheme of things and yet for reasons of State policy he has to be patted on the back.

I am strongly attracted towards Communism and I feel that the only reasonable and scientific explanation of history is the Communist one. I do not approve of many things that have taken place in Russia nor am I a Communist in the accepted sense of the word. But taking everything together I have been greatly impressed by the Russian experiment.

I have a weakness for Oxford and what it stands for myself. If something like it, only with a broader base, could be retained, well and good. But even Oxford and its like are not worth the sacrifice of the wider mass culture and initiative that the right kind of Communism should bring forth.

After all, the ultimate choice seems to be between some type of Communism or Fascism; the middle forms seem to fade off. Between these two all my mind and heart is for the former.

FASCISM AND COMMUNISM

(*Statement issued to the press on December* 18, 1933)

The Indian press has been very kind and considerate to me and has given me numerous opportunities of giving publicity to my opinions. I must express my gratitude to it. But sometimes it gives me a shock and one of the biggest shocks that I have recently had has come today from the report of a so-called interview in Delhi given to certain foreign visitors. The *National Call* of Delhi first gave publicity to this and I was amazed to read what I was supposed to have said. The *Free Press Journal* of Bombay has now gone a few steps further and in a seven-column headline announces that I have put my cards on the table and declared that I prefer Fascism to Communism. I did not know that I had so far kept any cards up my sleeve. I have endeavoured during the last three months to give expression to my views in writings and speeches with as much clarity as I am capable of. Those views may be right or wrong but I had at least hoped that they were clear enough and no one could mistake them. To find that they were misunderstood and to be made to say the exact opposite of what I believe and mean to say comes as a shock and a disappointment.

The report of the Delhi interview is so full of errors and misstatements that it is a little difficult to correct it, short of re-writing the whole of it afresh. I do not propose to do so. I shall refer those who are interested in what I believe to read my writings on the subject. But one thing I wish to clear up and that is my attitude to

Fascism and Communism. I do believe that fundamentally the choice before the world today is one between some form of Communism and some form of Fascism, and I am all for the former, that is Communism. I dislike Fascism intensely and indeed I do not think it is anything more than a crude and brutal effort of the present capitalist order to preserve itself at any cost. There is no middle road between Fascism and Communism. One has to choose between the two and I choose the Communist ideal. In regard to the methods and approach to this ideal I may not agree with everything that the orthodox Communists have done. I think that these methods will have to adapt themselves to changing conditions and may vary in different countries. But I do think that the basic ideology of Communism and its scientific interpretation of history is sound.

I hope I have made myself clear. Only a person of unsound mind could express himself in the self-contradictory way which the reported interview makes out. Only a lunatic could favour Communism one day and Fascism the next day. I flatter myself that I am neither and claim to be sane and, perhaps, sober.

LABOUR AND THE CONGRESS

A message sent to the "Indian Labour Journal" on the occasion of its eleventh anniversary in November 1933.

During the great social and economic crisis that the world is passing through today, labour has a very special duty before it. For, inevitably, the burden of ideological leadership must remain with labour. In India, the national struggle covers and hides social differences. That is natural. But world events themselves are today forcing the pace and making even national movements more and more economic and social movements. All over the world there is a great struggle between the forces of labour and the forces of entrenched vested interest. The stakes are high and therefore we cannot afford either in our national struggle or in our social struggle to compromise with petty changes. If we are to profit by the world situation, we must make up our minds to struggle for a complete and fundamental change of regime. Nothing else should satisfy us, nothing else can solve our problems.

India is today in a somewhat confused state of mind. She finds that her old nationalist ideology does not fit in with the existing circumstances in the world. So she struggles to adopt a new way of thinking and this attempt to change over from the old to the new is a painful and confusing one. But the attempt must be proceeded with, for only thus by adopting a progressive ideology of social revolution, can India take an effective part in the freedom struggle as well as in the world struggle.

In such a social struggle labour has always occupied the foremost place. Indian labour therefore must wake up out of its lethargy, close up its ranks, and face the situation bravely and with confidence. It must give up its timid attitude and its demands for petty reforms and seek to play a part in the wider issue, which confront it and the world. Such opportunities come rarely. Our national struggle and our social economic struggle must join hands for the emancipation of the people of India.

Labour represents the productive working class, that is to say, the class which economically and historically is the most important class of the future. It is therefore possible for Labour to have a much clearer ideology than for the Congress. Labour is in theory, the most revolutionary group in a country because it represents the forces of the future. But in India today, as in every country under alien domination, the national problem overshadows social problems and nationalism is more revolutionary than the social struggle. World events are, however, pushing economic issues more and more to the front and even national organisations are becoming infected by such issues.

I am quite clear that labour should organise itself in the Trade Unions and the like quite separately. Otherwise it will get lost in mixed nationalist groups. At the same time Labour must recognise that nationalism is the strongest force in the country today and it must co-operate with it fully. It should also of course try to influence it on the economic issues.

I am not in theory against a Labour Political Party apart from the Congress, but I fear that any attempt to make such a party today will only result in the exploita-

tion of Labour by a number of individuals who will try to advance themselves at the cost of labour.

The National Congress is, as its name implies, a national organisation. Its purpose is national freedom for India. It includes many classes and groups which have really conflicting social interests, but the common national platform keeps them together for the moment. During the past years it has inclined towards a Socialist programme, but it is far from being socialist.

I should personally like the Congress to go very much further and to adopt a full socialist programme. I recognise also that there are many groups in the Congress today who are ideologically very backward and desire to prevent the Congress from going ahead. Recognising all this, I have no doubt whatever, that the Congress has been far the most militant organisation in India during recent years. It seems to me perfectly ridiculous for people who do nothing effective themselves to accuse Congress of lack of militancy. There is a grave danger of most of our so-called socialist confining their militancy to catch phrases and drawing room parlours.

For Congressmen who are also interested in labour affairs, the course of action should be as follows: They should function separately in labour organisations, trade unions etc., and help them to develop an ideology and programme of activity as militant as possible, even in advance of Congress programme. In the National Congress they should try to push on an economic orientation in consonance with the labour programme. Inevitably the Congress programme, so far as ideology goes, will not be as advanced as the labour programme. But it is quite possible to have co-operation in militant activity.

TRADE UNION CONGRESS

(A brief resume of the speech delivered at the 13th Session of the All-India Trade Union Congress at Cawnpore on December 23, 1933).

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, speaking at the All-India Trade Union Congress, said that he was addressing the Congress after about four years. These four years had seen great changes in India both in the National and the Trade Union movement. A great struggle of freedom had been carried on and was still being carried on. The Trade Union movement had been split up into various parts and he was not yet clear as to what each part stood for. During his period in prison he had been unable to follow the various developments in the labour world. He had tried to find out some facts recently but was still not in a position to know the exact situation. While he deplored the lack of unity he felt that to some extent it was inevitable as the struggle proceeded on. On one side there would be reformists and constitutionalists, and on the other revolutionary elements that wanted a radical change in the social and political structure. Much the same thing was happening in the National movement.

The present position of Labour in India was deplorable. There was tremendous unemployment and the wages were cut down and living standard was reduced. Labour only met these attacks by presenting a united front. World conditions were such that mere crumbs would fall from the imperialists' and capitalists' table to the labour

masses. As these conditions had deteriorated there was less and less to dispute. Therefore, the only way out for labour was to fight for a radical change which would give power. The labour method of fight was organisation and strike. Many petty strikes were taking place all over the country because of the attempts to lower wages. These individuals strikes were bound to fail. If they wanted them to succeed there should be coordination and organisation resulting when time came in a general strike to prevent the progressive cutting down of the wages. As a matter of fact the labour problem and the national problem were both coming nearer to each other and had to face the ultimate issue—that is to say, the removal of British imperialism from India. No other solution would satisfy either or bring relief to the masses. He hoped, therefore, that there would be an increasing amount of cooperation between the two great movements. The National movement could not of course drop its national character and become a purely labour movement. Nor could the labour movement become just a part of the national movement because it represented technically the class-conscious workers who were the most revolutionary elements in the population. But there was no reason why the two could not co-operate wherever possible.

Some people said that after years of struggle our condition was worse than it was before. That was always so when a fight took place about fundamental matters. Today imperialism and capitalism all over the world were fighting in the last ditch a battle to preserve themselves and it was up to labour to organise and strengthen themselves and put their whole weight in the struggle. If they did so and at the same time cooperated with the National move-

ment and influenced it, he had no doubt that victory would come to them and not only would thereby bring political freedom in India but social freedom also.

INDIAN STATES

(Message sent to the Rajputana States' Peoples' Convention held at Beawar on December 29, 1933.)

Recent events in India and England have made it clear that all the reactionary forces—British and Indian—are combining together to prevent or delay the freedom of the Indian people. These forces have tried to suppress our freedom movement and the White Paper is an attempt to consolidate the hold of all these vested interests. Nothing is more significant than the utterly reactionary attitude of the Indian Princes and the backing it received from the Government.

It is probable that free India will be a federation but it is quite certain that nothing even remotely resembling freedom can come out of the federation that has been suggesed in the White Paper. This proposed federation is merely meant to prevent India's growth and enchain her still further to feudal and out-of-date systems. It is quite impossible to progress from this federation to freedom without breaking the federation to pieces.

It seems to me, therefore, that all of us whether in the Indian States or the rest of India must appreciate this position clearly and realise that our only course is to reject utterly any such bogus federation. We must stick to the completest form of independence which means complete absence of foreign control as well as a fully democratic form of Government. The Indian States' system, as it exists to-day, must go root and branch.

Your Convention will deal with many matters of present day importance such as the States' Protection Bill and the repression that is going on in the Indian States. These loom large before you but they are after all the inevitable products of the system as it exists to-day. Therefore I hope you will frame your objective clearly and uncompromisingly and draw up your programme accordingly.

CIVICS AND POLITICS

(*Calcutta Municipal Gazette November 25, 1933*)

Politics today are in a sorry mess all over the world and distraught politicians seek in vain for a remedy. Their old methods have failed completely and events have marched ahead leaving the old guard of politicians far behind. With the passing of politics from the centre of the world's stage, economics have appeared from behind the scenes and have dominated men and events. The old style of politician feels helpless before this transformation, but in the West, at any rate, he has been forced to bow down before the new gods and pay them homage. Not so in India where many of us still cling to outworn theories and discredited methods.

The dominance of economics has brought new ideas and new theories in its train and the problems of the world are viewed in a new perspective. Out of this welter of ideas and theories has grown the scientific interpretation of history and politics and economics that is known as scientific socialism or Marxism or communism. Many learned books have been written on this subject and passions have been roused and bitter conflicts have taken place.

There is one aspect of communism however which is easy to understand for the man in the street. Communism is in a way the municipalization of the country or the world. Of course this is a wholly insufficient definition. None the less it does give us a glimpse of what underlies communism. The true civic ideal aims at common possession and common enjoyment of municipal

amenities, and these amenities go on increasing till they comprise almost everything that a citizen requires. Roads, bridges, lighting, water-supply, sanitation, hospitals and medical relief, libraries, education, parks and recreation grounds, games, proper housing, museums, art galleries, theatres, music—are some of the activities that a modern up-to-date municipality should be interested in, and some of the amenities which it should provide free of cost to all its citizens. Communism means the extension and the application of this civic ideal to the larger group of the nation and ultimately to the world. And so the civic ideal becomes the national and the international ideal, and, with the passing of pure politics, civics becomes merged in the communist ideal of a scientific ordering of the world's affairs and a proper planning and control, on behalf of and for the benefit of the masses, of production and distribution and the many other activities of the modern world.

THE CIVIC IDEAL

(*The Citizen, Lucknow, December 1933*).

In the old days the state was looked upon almost as the private possession of the sovereign. His chief business was to tax his subjects and to protect them from external invasion and internal disorder from robbers and the like. Having given a certain measure of security to his people, his job was done. If he did this and did not impose too crushing a burden of taxation, he was looked upon as a good sovereign. Such states have been called 'police states' as the principal duties of the government were in the nature of police duties. Our Indian States today are more or less of this type, with this essential difference that they have not to protect themselves from external invasion. The British Government in India during the nineteenth century was also largely a police government. It did very little for the educational, cultural, industrial, medical and sanitary development of the state. Gradually, however, it was forced by circumstances to interest itself in some of the multifarious activities of the modern state, though its interest did not go far and it produced very little in the shape of actual results.

It was in the cities that the idea of providing something more than protection for the citizen first developed. The close association of a large number of human beings in cities resulted in the growth of co-operative activities and of culture. The civic ideal begins to emerge, the idea that amenities for the common enjoyment of the citizens should

be provided for. Roads and bridges, which were privately owned and subject to tolls, became public property and free to all without payment. Sanitation, lighting, water-supply, hospitals and medical relief, parks and recreation grounds, schools and colleges, libraries and museums, became the functions of the municipality. To-day it is considered the function of a municipality not only to provide all these free of any charge to all its citizens, but also to provide art-galleries, theatres, music and, most important of all, proper housing for every body. But obviously the basic need is for food and to present art and culture to a man who has no food is to mock him. Hence it is the business of a modern municipality today to see to it that no one starves within its confines; to provide work for those who are workless, and, if no work is to be had, to provide food. That is the civic ideal to-day, although few municipalities approach it. In India, of course, we are still very far from even having a glimpse of the ideal.

This civic ideal gradually captured the state and with it the activities of the state grew in all directions. The police state transformed itself into the modern state, a complex, paternal organism with a large number of departments and spheres of activities, and innumerable contacts with the individual citizen. Not only did it give him security from external invasion and internal disorder, but it educated him, taught him industries, tried to raise his standard of living, gave him opportunities for the development of culture, provided him with insurance schemes to enable him to face an unforeseen contingency, gave him all manner of amenities, and made itself responsible for his work and food. The civic ideal was spreading. Today it has spread as far as it can under the existing social structure

and it finds its further progress stopped so long as that structure remains what it is.

The true civic ideal is the socialist ideal, the communist ideal. It means the common enjoyment of the wealth that is produced in nature and by human endeavour. That ideal can only be reached when the present social structure is changed and gives place to socialism.

A SHADOW CONFERENCE

Some friends have asked me for my opinion on the proposed "All-Parties Conference" which has been suggested in Bombay. I should have thought that so far as Congressmen were concerned, or those who think along Congress lines, there was no room for doubt. We stand for independence and the fullest self-determination by the people of India without any interference by an alien authority. It is obvious that any attempt to consider the White Paper and to try to improve it is incompatible with independence and self-determination. It is also incompatible with what is termed Dominion Status or even a small measure of political or economic freedom. Only those who are prepared to give up their oft-repeating objective, forget their pledges, and accept, not for today and tomorrow but for the distant future, the steel chains of British imperialism and political and financial and military control, can discuss the White Paper and its off-shoots. For Congressmen and others who work for a fundamental change in India there is going to be no compromise on this issue whatever happens. For them therefore to associate themselves with any attempt to modify the White Paper would be a betrayal of all they stand for and a strengthening of the reactionary elements in the country. Whatever the motives of those who are sponsoring the so-called All Parties Conference may be, there can be no doubt to any political realist that their action is harmful to the country and in the interests of British imperialism.

The White Paper, even with all the modifications that

have been suggested by its liberal critics, would be worthy only of the waste paper basket, where no doubt it will find a refuge sooner or later. But it is well-known that no modifications are likely to materialize and yet those very gentlemen who tell us so meet together solemnly to discuss modifications. Self-deception could hardly go further; or is it that their urge somehow to cooperate with British imperialism is so great that it dims their vision?

It seems to me clear that between those who continuously think of this cooperation and are always prepared to submit to every decision of the ruling power, and those who aim at independence, there is nothing in common. What are we to discuss if we meet together?

Some newspapers, who have done me the honour of publishing my recent article on the Constituent Assembly, have put me a question. All this is very well, they say, but what of the present? I am afraid I can give no answer that can satisfy those who can think or act only in terms of an impotent constitutionalism. Constitutionalism is dead and the worms have already been at it and there is going to be no resurrection. Not even the National Congress can revive it by resolution for we have passed that historical stage of growth. Every national movement, every social movement, when it is strong enough to endanger the existing order, passes that stage and cannot go back, though individuals and groups may collapse or retire. An *impasse* is created and this continues till the existing order breaks down. To suggest that the *impasse* should be resolved by an attempt to revive the corpse of constitutionalism is to ignore both historical precedent and existing facts, for the conditions that created the *impasse* continue and function more intensely and thus bring about a worse

impasse. The only way out is to struggle through to the other side. Therefore the only possible answer to the question: what of the present, is: carry on the struggle for freedom without compromise or going back or faltering.

No person who understands the implications of a Constituent Assembly imagines that it can meet under the distinguished patronage of the British government. Its patrons can only be the people of India. And because today the Indian people are held down by the imperialist machine, speaking and writing and meeting and press are suppressed and only a faithful echo of our rulers' wishes are permitted, there can be no Constituent Assembly. It will come in good time when the Indian people gain the upper hand. Not till then. And meanwhile all talk of "All Parties Conference" and "Conventions" is so much shadow talk not even resulting in shadow action.

ALLAHABAD
January 11, 1934

A MESSAGE TO THE PRAYAG MAHILA VIDYAPITHA

Many years ago—so much has happened during recent years that I have almost lost the exact count of time and even a few years seem long ago—I had the honour of laying the foundation stone of the hall of the Mahila Vidyapitha. Since then I have been engrossed in the dust and tumble of politics and direct action, and the struggle for India's freedom has filled my mind. I have lost touch with the Mahila Vidyapitha. During the last four months that I have been in the wider world outside the prison walls many a call has come to me and I have been invited to participate in a variety of public activities. I have not listened to these calls and have kept away from these activities, for my ears were open to only one call and all my energy was directed to one end. That call was the call of India, our unhappy and long-oppressed motherland, and especially of our suffering and exploited masses, and that end was the complete freedom of the Indian people.

I have refused therefore to be drawn away from the main issue to other and minor activities, important as some of these were in their own limited spheres. But when Shri Sangam Lal came to me and pressed me to address the convocation of the Mahila Vidyapitha, I found it difficult to resist his appeal. For behind that appeal I saw the girls and young women of India, on the threshold of life, trying to free themselves from an age-long bondage and peeping into the future with diffidence and yet, as youth will, with the eyes of hope.

I agreed therefore provisionally and diffidently for I was not sure if a more urgent call would not call me elsewhere. And now I find that urgent call has come from the sorely-afflicted province of Bengal and I must go there and I may not be back in time for the convocation of the Mahila Vidyapitha. I regret this and all I can do is to leave this message behind.

If our nation is to rise, how can it do so if half the nation, if our womenkind, lag behind and remain ignorant and uneducated? How can our children grow up into self-reliant and efficient citizens of India if their mothers are not themselves self-reliant and efficient? Our history tells us of many wise women and many that were true and brave even unto death. We treasure their examples and are inspired by them, and yet we know that the lot of women in India and elsewhere has been an unhappy one. Our civilization, our customs, our laws, have all been made by man and he has taken good care to keep himself in a superior position and to treat woman as a chattel and a plaything to be exploited for his own advantage and amusement. Under this continuous pressure woman has been unable to grow and to develop her capacities to her fullest, and then man has blamed her for her backwardness.

Gradually, in some of the countries of the West, woman has succeeded in getting a measure of freedom, but in India we are still backward, although the urge to progress has come here too. We have to fight many social evils; we have to break many an inherited custom that enchains us and drags us down. Men and women, like plants and flowers, can only grow in the sun-light and fresh air of freedom; they wilt and stunt themselves in the dark shadow and suffocating atmosphere of alien

domination.

For all of us, therefore, the first problem that presents itself is how to free India and remove the many burdens of the Indian masses. But the women of India have an additional task and that is to free themselves from the tyranny of man-made custom and law. They will have to carry on this second struggle by themselves for man is not likely to help them.

Many of the girls and young women present at the convocation will have finished their courses, taken their degrees, and prepared themselves for activities in a larger sphere. What ideals will they carry with them to this wider world, what inner urge will fashion them and govern their actions? Many of them, I am afraid, will relapse into the humdrum day to day activities of the household and seldom think of ideals or other obligations; many will think only of earning a livelihood. Both these are no doubt necessary, but if this is all that the Mahila Vidyapitha has taught its students, it has failed of its purpose. For a university that wishes to justify itself must train and send out into the world knight-errants in the cause of truth and freedom and justice, who will battle fearlessly against oppression and evil. I hope there are some such amongst you, some who prefer to climb the mountains, facing risk and danger, to remaining in the misty and unhealthy valleys below.

But our universities do not encourage the climbing of mountains; they prefer the safety of the lowlands and valleys. They do not encourage initiative and freedom; like true children of our foreign rulers, they prefer the rule of authority and a discipline imposed from above. Is it any wonder that their products are disappointing and

ineffective and stunted, and misfits in this changing world of ours?

There have been many critics of our universities and most of their criticisms are justified. Indeed hardly any one has a good word for the Indian universities. But even the critics have looked upon the university as an upper class organ of education. It does not touch the masses. Education to be real and national must have roots in the soil and reach down to the masses. That is not possible today because of our alien government and our old-world social system. But some of you who go out of the Vidyapitha and help in the education of others must bear this in mind and work for a change.

It is sometimes said, and I believe the Vidyapitha itself lays stress on this, that woman's education should be something apart from that of man's. It should train her for household duties and for the widely-practised profession of marriage. I am afraid I am unable to agree to this limited and one-sided view of women's education. I am convinced that women should be given the best of education in every department of human activity and be trained to play an effective part in all professions and spheres. In particular, the habit of looking upon marriage as a profession almost and as the sole economic refuge for woman will have to go before woman can have any freedom. Freedom depends on economic conditions even more than political and if woman is not economically free and self-earning she will have to depend on her husband or some one else, and dependents are never free. The association of man and woman should be of perfect freedom and perfect comradeship with no dependence of one on the other.

What will you do, graduates and others of the Vidyapitha, when you go out ? Will you just drift and accept things as they are, however bad they may be ? Will you be content with pious and ineffective expressions of sympathy for what is good and desirable and do nothing more ? Or will you not justify your education and prove your mettle by hurling defiance at the evils that encompass you ? The purdah, that evil relic of a barbarous age, which imprisons the body and mind of so many of our sisters—Will you not tear it to bits and burn the fragments ? Untouchability and caste, which degrade humanity and help in the exploitation of one class by another—will you not fight them and end them and thus help in bringing a measure of equality in this country ? Our marriage laws and many of our out-of-date customs which hold us back and especially crush our womenfolk —will you not combat them and bring them in line with modern conditions ? Will you not also fight with energy and determination for the physical improvement of our women by games in the open air and athletics and sane living so that India may be full of strong and healthy and beautiful women and happy children ? And, above all, will you not play a gallant part in the struggle for national and social freedom that is convulsing our country today ?

I have put these many questions to you, but the answers to them have already come from thousands of brave girls and women who have played a leading part in our freedom struggle during the last four years. Who has not been thrilled at the sight of our sisters, unused as they were to public activity, leaving the shelter of their homes and standing shoulder to shoulder with their brothers in the fight for India's freedom ? They shamed

many a person who called himself a man, and they proclaimed to the world that the women of India had arisen from their long slumber and would not be denied their rights.

The women of India have answered, and so I greet you, girls and young women of the Mahila Vidyapitha, and I charge you to keep that torch of freedom burning brightly till it spreads its lustre all over this ancient and dearly-loved land of ours.

ALLAHABAD

January 12, 1934